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JOURNEY
THROUGH THE WAR MIND

by the same author

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The Book of Joad
The Testament of Joad
Guide to Modern Thought
Return to Philosophy
Guide to Modern Wickedness
Philosophy for Our Times
etc.

JOURNEY
THROUGH THE WAR MIND

by

C. E. M. JOAD

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

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When the sales of the old brought production of a new edition of this book over the horizon of the practicable and, I hope, the lucrative, I naturally put the question to myself 'With how much of it do you still agree; and, if the answer is "very little", what justification have you for putting before the public views which are no longer yours?'

Now it would be easy to answer by pointing out that until the reader reaches Chapter XII—if he ever does—none of the views which he meets is mine; all, in fact, are explicitly attributed to other people, in so far as spokesmen so completely eviscerated of personality as the lay figures designated by the letters A to F can be called 'people'. The evisceration was in part deliberate; I wanted to produce a series of voices, with the purity of whose expression of their distinctive points of view no distracting personal traits should be allowed to interfere—they were to be 'voices et praeterea nihil'; in part it was involuntary, since I am incapable of creating real characters, or indeed of making anybody talk differently from myself; a disability which has prevented me from realizing the dearest of my ambitions, and writing a play. The book, then, contains what is in effect nothing more than a gallery of embodied points of view.

At the same time it would be idle to pretend that these points of view have remained either in my mind or in that of the public, precisely where they were three years ago. Inevitably, they have been modified by three years of war. This book was conceived and written in the mood of dismay evoked by the outbreak of war; I felt as if the bottom had been knocked

out of my universe, as if my world had become a vacuum and I a wraith who floated in it. The writing of the book was an attempt to invest myself once again with the solidity of a body, a body who badly needed to take its bearings. The various chapters may, then, be regarded as bearings by means of which a bewildered body sought to orientate itself.

Since then the vacuum has, for me, been more than filled. I have been harder worked than ever before in my life, far too hard-worked to have time to spare for the doctrinal questions which the book is mainly concerned to canvass. Still one's mind changes even when one is too busy to notice the changes, and looking once again through the apologias of my various spokesmen, I am sensible not so much of a change of view as of a shift of interest. A, for example, has become a bit of a bore; one takes all that for granted now. B's professional optimism has been revealed as the foolish complacency that it always was. C has swollen in importance and, briefed by Lord Vansittart, has, I am sorry to observe, a little more to say for herself than she had. D is very much where he was, but E has grown in stature. In a series of books reaching this country from America, the voice of Mr. Heard-hux is heard putting Yogi pacifism on the contemporary map. It may be that our civilization is in process of breaking up; if it is, then E is the only one of the lot of them who really talks sense. F is the only figure who moulders and had better be put into cold storage; she is all right, so far as she goes, but events have gone so very much farther that she has been left in the lurch.

The Conclusions stand. I was never more convinced of the necessity of some form of Federal Government after the war if our civilization is to survive, and I am glad to find myself in the good company that has subsequently joined me.

C. E. M. JOAD

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Chapter I

OUTBREAK OF WAR

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Ralaef Lodge,
Enoch Dhu.

Friday, 1st September 1939

It has been an extraordinary day, how extraordinary it is only now, sitting here alone by the fire, twenty-four miles from the nearest main road and fifty from the nearest person that I know, that I have begun to realize.

I had spent the earlier part of the week at Scarborough, where I had an engagement to lecture to the Co-operative Wholesale Society's Summer School. At any other time I would have enjoyed writing an account of the school, and dwelling upon the refreshing parochialism of its members—they still, it seems, believe that by means of co-operation, the sort of co-operation that one finds in the Consumers' Co-operative Society, the world may be saved and the millennium introduced, and are inclined to scout any suggestion of world disaster, or, if they admit the possibility of disaster, to be impatient of any remedy other than the sort of co-operation which is so notably exemplified by the Con-

sumers' Co-operative Society—their enormous interest in one another and their happy remoteness from contemporary events. Nothing, it was clear, was going to prevent them from enjoying the usual holiday in the usual way, not even the imminence of a European war. I applauded this determination and did my best to emulate the state of mind from which it sprang. In this I was reasonably successful. In fact I was sufficiently infected by the Olympian detachment of the Co-operators to forget for long periods on end the European situation, and what with bathing, lecturing, playing in a cricket match, dining out with some very pleasant preparatory schoolmasters just down from Oxford, going to see *Mr. Chips*—one of the best of films, just sufficiently on the right side of sentimentality to make one feel elevated without feeling sick, and engendering a belief in the fundamental decency of human nature and a determination to be decent oneself—taking a long walk up to Lillah Cross on the heather moors behind Cloughton, and cultivating the society of an exceptionally agreeable and attractive niece, I contrived to pass a very pleasant week.

For to-day the National Peace Council, of which I am at the moment the chairman, had called an emergency meeting to consider the European situation and I had arranged to get my lectures at the school over in four days so that I could return to town on Thursday night and be in time for the meeting this morning. It had also happened that my friend Donald Morley, who is the proud possessor of a shooting lodge in Scotland, had invited me to spend some days with him and try my hand at shooting grouse and catching trout. I have always wanted to shoot grouse, which I

have never done, and always wanted to catch trout, which I have often tried to do but never, at least, scarcely ever, done—fish never seem to bite when I am fishing—but more than grouse-shooting and trout-fishing did I want to diminish the vast extent of my ignorance of the Scottish Highlands.

And so on yesterday evening I was torn two ways. Duty certainly seemed to point to a return to London in order to attend the meeting of the National Peace Council. Yet I was unable to conceive what useful purpose a meeting of either Council or Executive could serve at the moment. We had already sent a telegram to the Prime Minister asking him to make every effort (*a*) to establish direct negotiations between Germany and Poland; (*b*) to extend these negotiations into a discussion of all the problems which bedevil contemporary Europe, with a view to effecting a general settlement to which Great Britain was urged to make positive contributions.

How admirable, but also, alas, how ineffective! The view of the National Peace Council had about as much chance of being attended to as the squeak of a mouse exhorting to conciliation a couple of lions who were roaring defiance and lashing their tails preparatory to mortal combat.

Anyway we had sent our telegram, and what more we could do I was unable to imagine.

Why, then, go to London simply to attend a meeting which could serve no useful purpose? 'But then,' I said to myself, 'you ought to be on the spot in case war does come, to darken the windows, comfort the family, assist in their removal to our house in the country and generally make yourself useful.' 'A fat lot of use I

should be,' I answered myself. 'I shall only get in the way, fuss, upset myself, and become infected with the prevailing agitation. Much better stay out of the way until there is something I can do.' Additional considerations were (1) that on Thursday night the situation looked a little better. There seemed to me to be reasons—it doesn't much matter now what they were —for thinking that war, even if it were to come, could not break out for several days; (2) that I am fond of Donald Morley, who is an old friend, admire his clever and talented wife, had not seen them for some time, had often proposed to myself the idea of going to visit them in Scotland, and for one reason or another failed to come up to the scratch and thought that, if I didn't keep my promise this time, I should never be asked again.

Besides, I was already in Yorkshire, which was halfway to the Highlands, and Donald, I knew, was at his lodge and had written to say that he would stay there, unless war was declared. Only that morning I had received a telegram saying he was expecting me on Friday.

Until the very last moment I remained undecided. I caught the 10 o'clock train at Scarborough on the Thursday night and left it at York. The train to London went south from Platform 7 in fifteen minutes; the train for Scotland went north from Platform 9 in ten. So great was my indecision that I thought I would let the Almighty decide for me: if there was a vacant third class sleeper on the northern train then, I told myself, I would take it; if not, not. (But then I never expected that there *would* be a vacant sleeper, since evacuation had already begun.) The northern train

drew in and there was just one sleeper. I accepted the sleeper as a sign of divine approval and went north to Scotland. (I never, by the way, interpret *bad* luck as a sign of divine disapproval.)

Ralaef, Donald's shooting lodge, was, I knew, very remote and solitary. There was no telephone, no post was delivered, the nearest shop, I understood, was twenty-odd miles away, and one reached the house by a track just passable for motors, which left the main road somewhere near this shop. If, on the other hand, one went to B——, walked or taxied to Forest Lodge, and then took a path over the mountains, the distance to Ralaef was only seventeen miles, eight miles in the taxi and nine over the mountains.

I arrived at B—— at six-thirty-four, having by the aid of Harbutt's beneficial ear plugs, slept tolerably well. Before starting on my walk I thought I had better have breakfast. Nothing seemed to offer itself but a small temperance hotel, where, after a good deal of trouble, I managed to obtain some breakfast about seven-thirty, and was duly charged four shillings for porridge, scrambled eggs, and coffee. At eight-thirty I was looking for a taxi. There was, it turned out, only one in the whole place, and this had already been impounded for the transport of evacuated children. It looked as if I should have to walk the eight miles to Forest Lodge, and then the nine further miles over the mountains to Ralaef.

While I was pondering the prospect the papers arrived. The *News Chronicle* featured on its front page the terms of Hitler's proposal for a settlement to the Polish dispute. He was to have Danzig at once and unreservedly, but there was to be a plebiscite over the

future of the Corridor, to be presided over by an international commission on the lines of the Saar plebiscite. This seemed to me to be hopeful. It was, I thought, at least a basis on which to negotiate. I felt vastly encouraged and, taking the paper under my arm to show the Morleys, set off on my walk.

It was a warm, sultry morning, the sky veiled by low, heavy clouds, and the atmosphere much like that of a Turkish bath. I started off through B—— park and was presently pounding along a bridle track running through woods by the side of a gorge. Along the bottom of the gorge a rapidly flowing river, the Tilt, ran its adventurous course, with frequent waterfalls and rapids. It was all very fine, but by the time my road crossed the river about four miles out of B—— I was already feeling tired and viewing with apprehension the remaining thirteen miles. Seventeen miles would have been nothing to me once, but now I am grown fat and heavy on my feet and in summer the least exertion puts me into a bath of sweat. Besides, my rucksack was very heavy, and the road seemed to go perpetually uphill. Also it seemed closer than ever. I rested, read the paper, and went on.

The woods had now come to an end and the road ran through open country with big fells which looked like the Yorkshire Pennines rising on each side of the river valley. Every two miles there was a farm, and as each farm was reached, I sat down for a rest. At the last farm before Forest Lodge I talked with the farmer, who had been listening to the ten-thirty news. He said that Hitler had been making a speech in which he had said something about meeting force with force. I pressed him for more details, but this, he said, was all

that he had managed to pick up, and being now concerned only to get to the end of my walk, I paid little attention and went on. Now this, as will presently appear, was an exceedingly important conversation; more because of what it omitted than of what it included.

Forest Lodge, I calculated, was a good nine miles from B—— station and by the time I reached it I wanted my lunch. I had bought some cut ham, bread, and butter, and oranges at the B—— stores and was sitting down to eat them by a stream when the rain which had been threatening all the morning came down. I had no mackintosh and the minimum of clothes in my rucksack, so to avoid getting wet I lunched squatting on some rocks in the bed of the stream under a bridge. It was a cold and cheerless business, so I cut lunch short, took off my coat and shirt, put the coat in my rucksack, and clutching the shirt, which was drenched with perspiration, and the *News Chronicle*, which was beginning to disintegrate, in one hand and *Tom Jones* and the map in the other, went on bare from the waist upwards.

The rain was a drizzle rather than a steady downpour—it was, I suppose, what is called a Scotch mist —and presently *Tom Jones*, the *News Chronicle*, the map and the shirt began to merge into a solid lump of indistinguishable dankness. I came to the end of the bridle track about two miles beyond Forest Lodge, where a car and a caravan marked the limits of civilization.

I was now following a path which ran rather sharply upwards along the side of the stream. I began to get dreadfully tired, and, as always when I am tired, I fell into a sort of dazed coma in which I could think of

nothing but the way, how far it was, and when I would get to the end of it; and, as always when I am tired, a rather silly refrain began to repeat itself interminably in my head. On this occasion it was the song that Charlie Chaplin sings in *Modern Times*.

Presently I began to speak my thoughts aloud to myself. 'That', I would say, 'must be the little stream marked on the map. It is a damned sight farther from the first stream I crossed than the map suggests.' For the tireder I grew, the longer seemed the way, so that I could have sworn that every mile was two.

There came a moment when, reaching a landmark, I suddenly realized I had broken the back of my journey. It was only one mile to the falls of Tarf; it could not be much more than three from there to Ralaef. To signalize my sense of relief I went down to the river, took off my clothes and bathed. It was terribly cold but very refreshing. Having put on my clothes, that is to say, my trousers, I looked at my watch. It was now about two-thirty and I should, I imagined, arrive about four. Already I pictured myself drinking tea and telling the Morleys all about my walk. After tea I would lie down.

Shortly after the falls of Tarf the path forked, the left-hand path went over the fell-side, the right followed for a time along the stream, climbed a little over a ridge and so to Ralaef. Much encouraged, I went along the right-hand fork; I walked and walked but still there was no Ralaef. 'This', I said to myself, 'is a very long three miles. But then', I added, 'you are very tired and you know how tiredness makes one overrate distances. Besides, there's the stream and here is the path.'

In spite of these self-assurances I did not feel quite

easy in my mind. There were, it seemed to me, one or two landmarks which, if the route were correct, should have been there but were not; and one or two which were there and should not have been. But these discrepancies I put down to my own misreading of the map. The valley, which had now become a gorge, along which the river ran, seemed endless; I must, I reckoned, have walked at least four miles from the falls of Tarf. Suddenly the gorge came to an end and there, sure enough, on a flat green expanse stood what appeared to be a large white building. The air was very misty and I couldn't see it clearly, but it must—of course it must—be the house.

I went on for another quarter mile; there was no house there. I had seen a mirage born of mist and my own fatigue. I had a moment of real panic. Ralaef did not exist; the place was bewitched, the map, the mountains, the Morleys were all in a conspiracy to bemuse and destroy me. In mitigation of my folly it must be remembered that I had been walking since eight in the morning and that it was now nearly four; that I had, during this time, seen only one person; that the wildness of the scenery had first impressed, then terrified, then 'got me down'. I knew how sparsely populated the Highlands were, how few the houses, how vast the moors. These fells which ran up fifteen hundred feet on every side of me did not, as in the wild places I knew—the Lakes, the Pennines, or North Wales—conceal valleys dotted with farmhouses and villages; behind them were more fells topped by bogs, rising to mountains well over three thousand feet high, and stretching without sign of human habitation for dozens of miles.

Frenziedly I pulled out the map and spread it on the heather. Where had I gone wrong? In a moment I saw. At the point a mile beyond the falls of Tarf where the path divided, there were not two paths, but three; what I had taken to be the right-hand path was in fact the middle. There was another path farther to the right of the one I had taken, and this was the path that led to Ralaef. It was a good three miles back to the fork, but there was nothing for it but to return. In a sense I was glad to know where I had gone wrong and what I should now do to go right. Nevertheless, my morale was so shattered by fatigue that I distrusted everything; my map-reading, my conclusions, my ability to act on them, my ability to follow the map at all. Normally I rather pride myself on my map-reading. How, then, I asked myself, could I have made such a silly mistake? And what guarantee was there that I would not make another?

Forgetting my fatigue in my panic, I started back at speed, but my feet were stumbling and unsure and, before I had gone half a mile, I turned my ankle and fell. The shock caused me to go more cautiously. Suppose I were seriously to twist my ankle or hurt my foot, so that I could go no farther? Who would find me in a place like this? I did not answer the question.

Slowly I made my way back to the fork. After what seemed hours and was, I suppose, something less than an hour, I found it. Yes, there was the right-hand path going steeply up the fell-side on the opposite side of the stream. If my reasoning was right, I had only to follow it and in two or three miles I should be at Ralaef. If not! I could not bear to think what would happen if not.

Those last three miles were endless. At any time I should have found them difficult to negotiate. The climb to the top of the fell was severe enough, and when the fell-top was reached, the path lost itself in a bog and became exceedingly difficult to follow. In a thick mist, I doubt if I could have found it at all. The scenery was formidable to a degree. I was now on a plateau covered by coarse grass and heather which seemed to stretch out indefinitely in every direction. In the farther distance were great hills half-shrouded in mist, with deep gorges running far into their sides. The horizon was shut in by peaks and clouds. It was a vaster and a lonelier prospect than I had ever seen, and nowhere in the whole expanse was there the slightest sign of man and his works, excepting only the doubtful path I was treading. When, topping a final ridge, I saw a group of buildings about a quarter of a mile in front of me, I could hardly believe them to be real, that my ardours and endurance were at last over. In sight of the house, it occurred to me to wonder for a moment whether the Morleys had not, after all, gone. It would, I thought, be a fitting conclusion to the hazards and hardships of the day to find the place empty. But a column of smoke ascending from one of the chimneys reassured me.

As I drew nearer, I saw what a large place it was, a great square, rambling building surrounded by half a dozen cottages and outhouses, with what seemed an enormous number of chimneys sprouting from its roof. 'Thank the Lord,' I said to myself. 'Comfort, a hot bath, good food, and a bottle of wine. Also company!' I made for the front door. There was no bell, so I opened it and walked in. There seemed to be nobody

about. I called aloud the name of my host. Then a green baize door opened and a young man, scarcely more than a boy, with a white face, appeared. 'Is Mr. Morley in?' I asked. He shook his head. 'Mrs. Morley?' He shook it again. 'Have they gone out?' 'Yes, sir.' 'Do you know when they will be back?' 'They won't be back, sir.' I must have looked rather disconcerted, for he went on to add: 'Mr. and Mrs. Morley packed up in a hurry and left at twelve o'clock this morning after hearing the news on the wireless.' 'What news?' 'Haven't you heard, sir?' he said. 'Germany declared war on Poland early this morning.'

As he uttered these remarkable words, there arose in the bowels of the house a sound, one of the most dreadful with which my ears have ever had the misfortune to be affronted. It was a cross between singing, screaming, moaning and crooning. Reflecting upon it afterwards, I came to the conclusion that it must be the kind of noise denoted by the word 'keening'. Crones in Irish plays 'keen', but I had never heard 'keening' in real life. 'What on earth', I asked the boy, 'is that?' 'That's the cook, sir,' he replied. Summoning my courage, I went into the kitchen to investigate the cook and to see if it were possible to get my clothes dried. At the table there sat a large woman with a red, blotched face; from her chin sprouted abundant tufts of hair, and she had a wild swivelling eye which roamed to and fro in its socket. As I came in, she suspended her 'keening', fixed me with the eye, and broke into rapid, violent speech. To my surprise I discovered that the speech was French, or something which more closely resembled French than any other language. So strongly had the idea of a local crone, half crazed by

the mountains and mists in which she had spent her life, fixed itself in my mind that for a moment I could make nothing of this stream of French words. Then I remembered that the Morleys prided themselves on the possession of a Basque cook who, though acclaimed a mistress of her art, was nevertheless reported to be queer in the head. This obviously was the cook, left behind in the hurry of departure. I did my best to get into communication with her, but although my French is tolerably fluent, albeit inaccurate, I made little headway. This was not surprising since (*a*) her Basque idioms and pronunciation would have been at the best of times extremely difficult to understand; (*b*) she was very deaf; (*c*) she was in fact queer in the head; (*d*) she was obviously excited by the sudden departure of the Morleys, realized that strange doings were afoot, and kept shouting at the top of her voice that there could not be a war because God had forbidden it. As my clothes were drying, she sat and raved at me, shouting, singing and, on one occasion—I do not expect this to be believed; indeed, I never thought to see such a thing myself—she put up her hand to her head, clutched some of her hair, and tore it out.

A curious situation, I reflected, in which to meet the Great War of 1939. Here was I marooned in the Scotch mountains, eight miles from the nearest house, twenty from the nearest village. I was with people no single one of whom I had ever seen before in my life; a young man, a maid, the keeper and his wife, and to add a touch of nightmare to the whole, a mad cook.

Presently normality reasserted itself. I had a hot bath, heard the six o'clock news, had dinner—not at all a bad dinner, considering the circumstances—

drank half a bottle of Burgundy which the boy butler found in a cupboard, had a glass of liqueur, and am now sitting down by the fire to take stock of the situation. The car is going down the road to-morrow to P—— to take back the cook. I, presumably, shall go with her and help to pilot her to London. It should be a formidable undertaking, especially if trains are uncertain, late, or non-existent, and if, as is only too likely, what trains there are should be full of soldiers and evacuees. If the cook starts singing in the carriage, I do not know how I shall cope with the situation.[1]

The sensible thing would be to stay here for a few days, shoot grouse, catch trout, and see how things develop. But I am restless and apprehensive, and pervaded by a new-found gregariousness. I crave the society of my kind. I feel that I must at all costs get back to London and see what is happening; then, perhaps, it will be possible to make plans. And so to-morrow I have contracted to pilot a half-crazed French cook across Scotland and England, which is an unpremeditated by-product of the international situation.

[1] She *did* start singing and, shamefully, after doing my best to appear unconnected, I withdrew from the carriage.

Chapter II

THE FIRST WEEKS

★

Sunday, 10th September 1939

At last, thank God, normality! It is eleven o'clock in the morning and very hot, and I am sitting on a bank on the north side of Amberley Wild Brooks. Over the Brooks themselves wisps of morning mist are floating; behind them, the downs are shrouded in a heat haze. My bank is on the edge of the mixed woodland country that fringes the Brooks on the north side. The predominant trees are oaks, but a spit of sand gives accommodation to heather and pines; birches are plentiful and there is quite a number of trees whose names I don't know. (How completely is a man over forty incapacitated by his age from acquiring knowledge even of the things he wants to know. For years past I have badly wanted to increase my store of horticultural, arboricultural, and agricultural knowledge, and have even committed to memory the names of flowers and trees; but the names simply will not stick.)

Except for the buzzing of wasps and the occasional

dropping of an acorn, there is complete stillness. It is the first time for nine days that I have been at peace. I can read, write, think, plan; or simply enjoy the place and the time without the disturbance of a single agitating emotion. I am conscious only of a mild pleasure in my condition and surroundings. At the moment I ask nothing better than that this condition should continue for the remainder of my life; I am also being forced to realize that there is nothing and nobody but myself to prevent it from continuing at any rate for a considerable period of my life. Why, for example, should I go back to the frustrations and exasperations of job-hunting in London? There is nothing to prevent me from going to my house in the country, helping to grow food, and living cheaply and simply until the war is over, just as there was nothing to prevent me from staying at the Morleys' lodge in Scotland, shooting, fishing, and reading books—nothing, that is to say, but my own restlessness.

I left the Morleys' because I wanted to be in touch with friends and events. Unable to tolerate the prospect of a life cut off from my kind, I was swept back to London on a wave of herd-feeling without any definite objective. It was only when I discovered that three-quarters of my income had disappeared in twenty-four hours—college closed, extension lecture and tutorial class work cancelled, market for literary wares so restricted as to be in effect non-existent, casual odd-ments and pickings, editorial work, the directorship of a press, and so on fallen away to leave the bare bones of financial indigence—it was only then, I say, that my newly discovered gregariousness, my vague restlessness at the prospect of being cut off, my desire to take

part in whatever national activities were afoot crystallized into a quite definite, and as the days passed, a frenzied search for a job. I had a small income from the college, a smaller pension, a few scanty dividends from investments; but of what avail were they against the claims of children, the demands of servants, the drain of a couple of unlettable houses, and a swingeing income-tax based upon the inflated earnings of the preceding year? And so for the first week of the war I stayed at home, pulling strings and writing begging letters. It has been a wholly miserable time. Every day I cut a fresh cable with the peace-time world; every day I put into cold storage another job. The secretary of this, that, and the other society came to see me. How many meetings to cancel? How carry on? What to do with the records? These were the sort of questions that they asked and which, in increasing gloom, I did my best to answer.

Meanwhile publishers were suspending the publication of books, and editors regretfully professing their inability to take articles for which they had arranged. While I was busily burying the old life, all round me a new life was springing up in which, apparently, I was to have no part. My friends were all at war work. The women were driving ambulances and enrolling for the W.V.S., the W.L.A., the A.F.S., the A.T.S., and as many other Auxiliary Services as there may be. The young men were flocking to the colours, the middle-aged men patrolling the streets as A.R.P. wardens and crowding into Government Departments. All were full of new plans and excited with new projects. It was not because I was unwilling, reluctant, or averse that I had no part in all this. For a time I wanted passionately to

take part and, as I say, pulled strings and wrote begging letters with the best of them. But the strings 'came away in my 'and like' and the begging letters produced polite replies from those who promised to bear my name in mind for future reference, to include it on registers, to refer it to Bigwigs, to bring it to the notice of Panjandrums, to file it, to index it, to pigeon-hole it, to do everything and anything with it except to give its owner what he wanted, work with pay. In my innocence I had thought that my talents, such as they were, made me rather less unsuitable for a post in the Ministry of Information than for work of any other kind. To begin with, as a lecturer on philosophy I had spent much of my time explaining difficult ideas to laymen. Then I was the writer of innumerable expository books and propagandist pamphlets. And where, I asked myself, is the place for exposition, where the fount of propaganda, if it is not in the Ministry of Information and Propaganda? Then again, I had been for sixteen years in the Civil Service and knew the ropes of a Government office. While this last qualification fitted me, as I supposed, for work in any Government Department, the two former fitted me more particularly for work in the Ministry of Information. More important still, a number of friends and acquaintances were, I knew, already there. They had been there in spirit for six months or more—having prearranged work for themselves in the event of war, while I in my innocence was still prating of peace—and in the flesh from the very moment when war had been announced. So blithely off I went to the Ministry intending to throw myself on the good offices of my friends. What I had not realized was that every writer,

editor, publicist, propagandist, and lecturer in London had conceived the same idea at the same time.

The Ministry was housed in the new University of London building which was familiar to me from occasional attendances at meetings of Boards of Studies and dinners in the Senate House to visiting philosophers—very good dinners they were, too. A hall ran down the whole length of the building and along one side of it a counter. Behind the counter stood the messengers. In that hall I must, in the course of a couple of visits, have seen from twelve to twenty people, every one of whom was engaged on the same quest as myself; that is to say, they were trying to get hold of any friend whom they knew to be already in the Ministry with a view to inducing him to use his influence to find them a job.

Meanwhile the fortunate friends who had been securely esconced on the band wagon for some months past, in the intervals of rushing off to conferences, interviewing journalists, dictating letters, and engaging in prolonged telephone conversations with fellow officials, were promising to do what they could, noting down particulars, passing on the importunate caller to someone else 'who is in ever so much better a position than I am to know what posts there are and how many people are being taken on', or excusing themselves from attending to their callers on the ground of urgently pressing business. What importunacy on the part of the job hunters; what embarrassed politeness on the part of the officials! The increase in the boredom of the latter as they found themselves encountering by letter or in the flesh the whole range of their acquaintance from intimate friends to the most fugi-

tive of fellow cocktail drinkers met at the most casual of parties, was matched only by the increase in the disappointment of the former, who, trusting to the prestige of their public reputations to secure them a post, found that they were very far from being the great men they had thought themselves. It is always disconcerting when the world refuses to take one at one's own valuation, and as balloon after balloon of self-esteem was de-gassed, bubble after bubble of reputation pricked, the purlieus of the Ministry were filled with the hissing of continuous deflation.

For the paucity of appointments there was a good reason. For months past the Ministry of Labour had, I was told, been preparing a register of professional persons, a most elaborate register, in which every name was indexed and docketed and pigeon-holed into its appropriate category—I subsequently gathered that I occupied an equally lowly position in each of three categories —with the object of constituting a kind of tank or reservoir in which the various professional fish could be stored, until their services were required for wartime appointments on the staff of Government Departments. It appeared that the Ministry of Information had refrained from taking its fish from the pool and had hooked quite a number of them direct. At least, it had been hooking direct for the first five days of the war, but now the big guns of the Treasury had begun to thunder through a series of stiff official letters. The unorthodox procedure of the Ministry must stop; for the future it must, like every other department, betake itself to the waters of the official pool. Having been brought to the banks, was it prepared to drink? It seemed doubtful, at any rate for the present. Enough

staff had, I was given to understand, been taken on to meet all immediately foreseeable emergencies. And even if the Ministry of Information's nets were cast into the pool, it seemed unlikely that I should be included in the draught of fishes; for repairing to the Ministry of Labour as to the fountain-head, I found myself regaled with a lengthy disquisition, on the twin themes of my incompetence as a civil servant and the unfortunate publicity accorded to the case of an escapading daughter, by an official who was at the same time vociferously proclaiming his inability to give interviews or even to reply to telephone calls owing to extreme pressure of work.

I came away from these skirmishes with officials discouraged and faintly repelled. I was, it was clear, not one of those who had 'gone in' with the first rush. Now it seemed unlikely that I should 'go in' for some considerable time, if at all. The thought at first depressed me. I had wanted to help in this war, not because I thought that there should have been war, but because, once war was declared, there seemed to be no particular point in barking like an impotent puppy at the heels of the war machine in the hope of making it stop. Even if the road which had been taken was a wrong one, it was too late to turn back now. The important thing, now that the war had started, seemed to me to have it over and done with as soon as possible. Accordingly, I was willing and anxious to do what I could, and it seemed to me that if I could find my way into the Ministry of Information, I could use what little influence I possessed in trying to mitigate the ferocities of war and to hasten the coming of peace. I knew that the chance of my being able to affect the

course of events was in fact negligible, but I should be pulling away at one end of a rope with all those who believed, as I did, that the Nazi régime was an outrage upon human decency and civilization, and I should derive from that association a feeling of comradeship which would remove the utter loneliness and desolation of the spirit that the war had brought. I looked, then, to Government work to occupy my mind and to fill my pocket. 'To fill my pocket'; yes, that was the point, for in view of the disconcerting drop in my income, money must be found from some source, otherwise. . . .

Otherwise what? . . . At this point another set of considerations began to make itself felt.

(1) Why, I asked myself, should I continue to batter against the brick walls of official indifference? I had spent sixteen years in a Government Department, and for most of that time I had been moving heaven and earth to get out of it. To be moving heaven and earth to get into it again was to cut a poor figure in my own estimation. For why, I asked myself, did I suppose that I should like Government work any better than I had done, or that I should make any better job of it? Should I not be just as miserable at the prospect of burrowing like a mole into the tube on a fine autumn morning, just as restless as I sat at my desk, just as anxious to see what the world looked like at eleven o'clock, just as resentful of arbitrary instructions, just as impatient when six civil servants took two hours to discuss at a committee what could have been settled in two minutes by two of them in private, as I had been during my unregretted career in the Civil Service?

(2) Here was an opportunity to show myself a philosopher and cultivate the mind. Why reject it? All my life I had wanted the chance to occupy myself wholly and continuously with nature and books and the things I cared for. Why not, then, go to live with my children at my house in the country, write philosophy, read books, cultivate the garden and grow food? For the first time in my life I should see the whole cycle of the seasons, not merely the summer which bored me, and the beginnings of an autumn whose middle and end were shrouded from me in London. For the first time in my life I should not have to turn my back on nature at that most critical and glorious moment of the spring which comes somewhere in the third week of April.

Well, why not? If I shut up my house in Hampstead I could, I imagined, just manage to make ends meet. Cultivating one's garden is a well-advertised recipe for troubled times, and I have for years been complaining of insufficient leisure to read important books. And if this plan for a life in a world at war was open to censure on the ground of being at once Olympian and remote—who was I, I might well ask myself, to take it upon myself to inhabit an ivory tower of intellectual aloofness built upon an allotment of vegetables?—I could always salve my social conscience by joining one or more of the innumerable committees which were engaged in planning the peace that was to follow the war. It was necessary, no doubt, to work wholeheartedly for the destruction of the Nazi tyranny, one of the most horrible that the world has known, but this, albeit a desirable, would be only a negative result of the war. The one constructive aim that seemed to me worth

while was the establishment of conditions which would make a recurrence of the war impossible. Much, therefore, depended upon the objects for which the British Government was fighting. Were there to be annexations, indemnities, the exaction of the ultimate pound of flesh, and the carving up of German territory, or a just and durable peace leaving no legacy of festering wounds to rankle in men's minds until, after a couple of decades, they once again broke out in open war? I knew of several groups who were engaged in the supremely important task of drawing up a list of war aims which, while sufficiently generous to preclude a repetition of the tragedy of Versailles, would at the same time be sufficiently 'realistic' to stand a chance of endorsement by the British Government. To join one of these groups was an obvious step. Growing vegetables, reading philosophy, cultivating one's mind, enjoying nature and working with friends on the compilation of a plan for peace—the prospect was by no means an unattractive one. Indeed, from many points of view it was exceedingly attractive.

Well, then, I asked myself, why not? For the reason which had brought me scuttling home from Scotland, which rendered the prospect of any prolonged seclusion in the country intolerable, and which in half an hour's time would lead me to turn my back upon this pleasant bank and seek the society of my kind, that is to say, an all-pervasive and irresistible gregariousness. I simply could not, I felt, bury myself in the country; I must be in touch with people and events, to hear and pass the news, to gossip with friends, to observe from close quarters the conduct of affairs, even if I had no share in them. In a word, I wanted the society of my

kind and without it I felt lonely and cut off. The feeling is, I suppose, natural enough, and has a well-understood biological root. When the pack is in danger, its members feel impelled to join it for shelter and support. A flock of sheep never huddles so closely as when it conceives itself to be threatened.

The popular view about solitude is, I reflected, wrong, as wrong as the popular view about music. Just as it is only the breast which is already untroubled which is capable of being soothed by music, so it is only the mind which is happy and serene that can enjoy solitude. When one is disquieted and apprehensive, one seeks society. Moreover, such small services as might not improperly be regarded as duties, the endeavour to mitigate, so far as I could, the ferocity of the struggle, to secure peace at the earliest possible moment, and to avoid another Versailles with all that these endeavours involved in the way of the discussion and early publication of war aims and the propaganda work involved in commending these war aims to the public, services whose performance involved a constant attendance at committees and meetings, required that I should be on tap in London. So back to London I resolved to go. It seemed a pity, I reflected, as I took a farewell glance at the Amberley Wild Brooks; the mist had at last lifted and the whole wide expanse of green water-meadows was shimmering in the haze. Everything was hushed in the noonday stillness of late summer; save for the occasional twitter of a wren in the thicket behind me, not a sound was audible.

If only my present mood would continue, how happily could I have lived through the war, enjoying

beauty and cultivating the mood of contemplative reflection which natural beauty engenders. But this, I knew, was impossible. My psychology was too deeply embedded in that of my community to enable me to cut myself adrift. For good or evil, I could not contract spiritually out of my community. Its trials must be my trials; its agitations my agitations; its affairs my affairs. To concentrate upon the self, to read books, enjoy art, play games, meditate philosophy, pursuits which in the last war seemed to me to constitute an obvious refuge, now appeared in the light of a patent betrayal. What had once seemed to me to be the part of a wise man, now appeared as the withdrawal of a selfish one. The beauty of Amberley Wild Brooks and all that beauty stood for must go, temporarily at least, into cold storage; and wondering when again I should be able to offer a clear and untroubled mind to the influence of nature and the enjoyment of beauty, I turned my back on the view and sought the London train.

Chapter III

THE EVIL THING THAT IS MAN

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Saturday, 16th September

A reinforcement of last week's decision has occurred. Inevitably, now that the first excitement is over and the war is well under way, I have been reflecting upon the nature and extent of the evils it will bring. Some of them are beyond the range of one's power of imagination; others are already clear. The war, it is now evident, may continue for several years —the British Government is planning for three. What these three years will bring it is impossible to foresee. Some hold that nothing less than the end of our civilization is threatened; others that, though something may survive, the material devastation will be so widespread, the spiritual breakdown so complete, that it will not be possible to restore the ordered structure of a society even remotely approximating to any that we have known. H. G. Wells, whose book, *The Fate of Homo Sapiens*, I have just been reading, goes further and envisages the possibility of the end of our species. We may well, he thinks, go down to history as the last,

and cleverest of the great apes, the apes who were clever enough to win the mastery of matter, but not clever enough to win the mastery of themselves, and so used their power to destroy themselves. 'Mankind,' he writes, 'which began in a cave and behind a wind-break, will end in the disease-soaked ruins of a slum.'

This, I cannot help thinking, is to look a little far. Nevertheless, it seems, at the moment, reasonably likely that the world that I and my generation have known may be shattered past repair, and the ways of life we have followed survive as a memory. Well, it was a good life while it lasted, a life of freedom for oneself and tolerance from others. I have taken advantage of this freedom and tolerance to enjoy myself pretty well. Like Samuel Butler, I have done those things that I ought not to have done, and I have left undone those things that I ought to have done, and until this last year or so I have been pretty well, thank you. For this life that I and my kind have been living during the quarter century which elapsed between the two great wars was for a member of the middle class with money in his pocket, a reasonable amount of leisure, and the health and energy which God has been good enough to bestow upon me—this life, I say, with all its imperfections and disappointments, was very well worth living. It was not, I am prepared to believe, up to the standard of the life of the pre-1914 world. Compared with that bygone age, men in these intervening years of the armistice lacked aim and purpose; they were without religion; they were defiantly lowbrow; they despised the things of the mind and the promptings of the spirit, and as a result there was a more than usually high pro-

portion of human beings who did not know what to do with themselves. There has been, especially in these later years, too much of the mood of which 'Oh hell! Let's go out in the car and have a drink somewhere' is the most appropriate expression. I am far from having been able altogether to escape the infection of this mood. Nevertheless, by and large I have had a good time and I am not complaining.

The reflections engendered by reading Wells's *The Fate of Homo Sapiens* combined with the fact that the war so long feared, so fervently prayed against, is now a reality, has set me meditating—I hope the avowal will not set the reader against me—upon the nature and prospects of our species. I think of the number of occasions in the past on which human life has achieved a certain level of civilized amenity, only to relapse again into violence and savagery. I enumerate in my mind the numbers and the names of the civilizations that have disappeared. Is there, I wonder, some fundamental flaw in our species, some taint, perhaps, which we have inherited from the primeval slime, which makes it impossible for a human civilization to rise above a certain level? We can attain the level; we have done so again and again, but we cannot, it seems, maintain life at the level which has been reached. Sooner or later it slips back.

I am sitting in the garden of an Amberley cottage reading *Tom Jones*—I wanted something to take my mind off the contemporary scene and being already in the thick of *Tom Jones*, which I had reserved for travelling and bedside reading, have permitted myself the unprecedented indulgence of stealing a chapter or two in the middle of the morning—and now pat to the

occasion comes Fielding's answer to my unspoken question. The Man of the Hill having concluded the story of his life and travels proceeds to comment at large upon mankind. His immediate object is to dissuade Jones from supposing that he can increase his knowledge of men by seeing foreign parts:

'Those who travel in order to acquaint themselves with the different manners of men, might spare themselves much pains, by going to a carnival at Venice; for there they will see at once all which they can discover in the several courts of Europe; the same hypocrisy, the same fraud, in short, the same follies and vices, dressed in different habits. In Spain, these are equipped with much gravity; and in Italy, with vast splendour: in France, a knave is dressed like a fop; and, in the northern countries, like a sloven: but human nature is everywhere the same, everywhere the object of detestation and scorn. As for my own part, I passed through all these nations as you, perhaps, may have done through a crowd at a show—jostling to get by them, holding my nose with one hand, and defending my pockets with the other, without speaking a word to any of them, while I was pressing on to see what I wanted to see; which, however entertaining it might be in itself, scarce made me amends for the trouble the company gave me.'

Jones is anxious to know how the Man of the Hill occupies his solitude. He replies that he devotes his days to reflecting upon the majesty of the Creator and contemplating the magnificence of his works. How unfortunate, he adds, that God should have spoilt his handiwork by the creation and inclusion in nature of man, his one mistake. 'Man alone, the king of this

globe, the last greatest work of the Supreme Being below the sun,—man alone hath basely dishonoured his own nature, and, by dishonesty, cruelty, ingratitude, and treachery, hath called his Maker's goodness in question by puzzling us to account how a benevolent being should form so foolish and vile an animal.'

I was a little surprised to come upon so bitter a passage in the genial Fielding, usually so sympathetic to human weakness, so tolerant of human folly; but it was in tune with my mood and set going a train of literary reminiscence on which for a few gloomy moments I embarked.

Man, we are given to understand, is a being so evil as to be an object of repulsion to a properly regulated mind—one holds one's nose with one hand at his approach, and defends one's pocket with the other. Undoubtedly the passage had a familiar ring. Where had I read something of the same kind? Why, of course, in the Fourth Satire of Gulliver. Perpetually Gulliver's equine Master is troubled by the question, can this abject, quarrelsome, vain, lustful, dirty beast be possessed of a reason? One would scarcely have thought so; yet if he is, as he claims to be, a *reasonable* being, his state is even worse than if he had been a creature purely of instinct. 'I was going on', says Gulliver, who has been engaged in a description of war, 'to more Particulars, when my Master commanded me Silence. He said, whoever understood the Nature of Yahoos might easily believe it possible for so vile an Animal, to be capable of every Action I had named, if their Strength and Cunning equalled their Malice. But, as my Discourse had increased his Abhorrence of the whole Species, so he found it gave him a Disturbance

in his Mind, to which he was wholly a Stranger before. He thought his ears being used to such abominable words, might by Degrees admit them with less Detestation. That, although he hated the Yahoos of this Country, yet he no more blamed them for their odious Qualities, than he did a Gnnayh (a Bird of Prey) for its Cruelty, or a sharp Stone for cutting his Hoof. But, when a Creature pretending to Reason, could be capable of such Enormities, he dreaded lest the Corruption of that Faculty might be worse than Brutality itself. He seemed therefore confident, that instead of Reason, we were only possessed of some Quality fitted to increase our natural Vices; as the Reflection from a troubled Stream returns the Image of an ill-shapen Body, not only *larger*, but more *distorted*.'

The King of Brobdingnag, after listening to Gulliver's account of the military triumphs of his countrymen, is similarly appalled:

'He was amazed how so impotent and groveling an Insect as I (these were his Expressions) could entertain such inhuman Ideas, and in so familiar a Manner as to appear wholly unmoved at all the Scenes of Blood and Desolation, which I had painted as the common Effects of those destructive Machines. . . . As for himself, he protested, that although few Things delighted him so much as new Discoveries in Art or in Nature; yet he would rather lose Half his Kingdom than be privy to such a Secret;[1] which he commanded me, as I valued my Life, never to mention any more.'

The good king is obviously repelled as much as he is shocked. These nasty little pygmies with their devilish inventions and absurd pretensions are, he wishes to

[1] The use of gunpowder.

convey, no fit subject for the contemplation of a virtuous intelligence.

He is doubtful whether he should permit himself to hear any more, but finally decides that he ought bear Gulliver's recital with as much equanimity as he can command, since it is the part of a wise man to acquaint himself with the depravity that exists in the world, that he may the more easily recognize it and the better defend himself against its approach; but he resolves to take these medicinal draughts from the spring of human nature only in the very smallest doses. Too much at a time might nauseate, it might even infect him. . . .

'I cannot but conclude the Bulk of your Natives, to be the most pernicious Race of little odious vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the Earth.'

This final insult to our species brought vividly to my mind a scene in the last play of *Back to Methuselah*, where two typical human beings from man's past are introduced under the names of Ozymandias and Cleopatra-Semiramis. Immediately they appear on the stage, they begin boasting and posturing and lying in the most humiliating and familiar manner. 'We are the Unalterable, the Irresistible, the Irresponsible, the Inevitable,' the Male begins.

> '*My name is Ozymandias, king of kings;*
> *Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair.*'

Presently the female bites the sculptor Pygmalion and kills him, abuses Ozymandias for allowing her to be insulted—'You would stand there and let me be treated like this, you unmanly coward'—and swears at the company generally. The reactions of our remote

descendants are strongly reminiscent of the Man of the Hill and the King of Brobdingnag.

'*Strephon:* They look dangerous. Keep away from them.

'*Ecrasia:* No need to tell us that. Pf! They poison the air.'

Presently an Ancient is brought on and prepares to liquidate these intruders from the past. They protest:

'*The Female Figure:* Oh, don't be so cruel. I am not fit to die. I will never bite anyone again. I will tell the truth. I will do good. Is it my fault if I was not made properly? Kill him; but spare me.

'*The Male Figure:* No! I have done no harm: she has. Kill her if you like; you have no right to kill me.'

Ozymandias's dying speech is: 'I knew I was really a king of kings. . . . Illusions'—this to our descendants —'farewell: we are going to our thrones.'

Finally the Ancient comments: 'Take these two abominations away to Pygmalion's laboratory, and destroy them with the rest of the laboratory refuse. Take care; do not touch their flesh; it is noxious: lift them by their robes.'

The Ancient's attitude is that of the Houyhnhnms, of the King of Brobdingnag, and of the Man of the Hill. What beastly little reptiles! How they stink! What is more, how they bite! Let us, then, avoid them if we can and hold our noses when we can't. All agree that mankind is so unedifying an object of contemplation that one will be well advised to think about something else. For the wise man will occupy his mind not with what is defective and changing, but with what is perfect and eternal. The Man of the Hill thinks about the Creator and His works; Plato's Guardians about the eternal

Forms, and Shaw's Ancients about mathematics, philosophy, and other matters whose nature it is impossible to convey to our undeveloped minds. Just as the student is elevated by the nobility, so he is degraded by the evil of the subject matter of his inquiry. Let him not, then, concern himself with the human. Mankind in fact is the improper study of man.

There emerges by implication, a recipe for occupation in war-time. We are to think not about changing things but about eternal; not about man but about mathematics; not about strategy but about philosophy. In other words, we are to turn our backs upon the market-place, tear up the newspapers, eschew the barrack yard, and cultivate our gardens.

The course indicated is precisely that which in the days before the war I had myself planned to follow, if war came, and which a week ago I had decided at any rate temporarily to reject. Now the combined wisdom of Swift, Shaw, Fielding, and Plato with occasional reinforcement from Voltaire seemed to suggest that the rejected course was the right one; that it was the part of a wise man to withdraw as far as possible from the world, and to concern himself as little as possible with its doings. Would one be justified in adopting their advice, at any rate for the period of the war, and withdrawing into the country?

The answer, I supposed, depended upon whether the estimate of human nature to which these great men, speaking through their characters, appeared collectively to subscribe was fundamentally correct. If it was, if men were incorrigibly bestial, differing from the animals only by virtue of the possession of reason which enabled them at once to aggravate and to dis-

guise their vices, then philosophy-reading and garden-cultivating were plainly indicated.

And it could not, I thought, be denied that there was much in the contemporary scene to bear out the truth of the picture. Here, for example, was General Franco defining his powers in a Pronunciamento in true Ozymandias-like manner:

'The national head of the Falange and supreme caudillo of the movement personifies all the values and honours thereof. As the author of the historic era in which Spain acquires the possibility of realizing her destiny and the aspirations of the movement, he fully assumes absolute authority.

'He is responsible only to God and to history.'

Here, again, was a pronouncement from the Poles that they would 'defend every inch of our soil with an ocean of our blood'. Here was Stalin, shortly to take part in the partition of Poland and to invade Finland, announcing that 'the Socialist Fatherland does not desire a foot of others' soil and therefore it will not yield an inch of its own.' Here was the Archbishop of Canterbury testifying to the truth of the doctrines of the Prince of Peace, of whose Church he is the head, by issuing an Archiepiscopal message to assert 'that Hitler's power being based on force, must be met with counter force'. Here was a Nazi writer, Wilhelm Stapl, informing his readers that when 'the Germanic, the Nordic man has set his foot upon the last strip of conquered land, he will take the crown of the world and lay it at God's feet, in order that he may be crowned by the Almighty.' Here was Julius Streicher chanting, 'when Jewish blood spurts under the knife things are going fine'. Here was another Nazi proudly informing

his hearers that whenever 'I hear the word culture I reach for my Browning'. Here, indeed, was a book entitled *Nazi Nuggets*, in which such sayings were paralleled by the hundred as the leaders of the Nazi party glorified war, derided peace, praised hunger, hardship, and cruelty, laughed at culture, boasted of their superiority to other races, derided fair dealing as weakness, and contemned mercy as folly. I conceded to Mussolini—since up to the time of writing he seemed at least to have the merit of not acting in accordance with his doctrines—the honour of crowning this random collection of contemporary human utterances: 'Though words are very beautiful things,' he had announced, 'rifles, machine guns, ships, aeroplanes, and cannons are more beautiful things still.' Yes, in all conscience there was enough contemporary material to support the Swift-Shaw-Fielding view.

The same afternoon I walked over to X to call on a family, the M's. I have used the word 'family', yet 'clan' would be more appropriate. A long, low farmhouse stands in the centre of a quadrangle. In the farmhouse live two old people; round the quadrangle are ranged four smaller houses inhabited by their descendants. The descendants were originally daughters who took their husbands to live with them, or who went to live there when their husbands died. The daughters brought up their children at X and in due course the children married and are now, in their turn, bringing up their children at X. The outbreak of war had brought in a number of outlying mothers and babies, all of them more or less directly related to the M's, by whom the usual family concourse was swollen. On the afternoon of my visit between forty and fifty

people of all ages ranging from the old couple to the youngest great-grandchild born only a month before, and squawling in her bassinette, were taking tea on the lawn.

I have known this family for many years and summer after summer, when staying at Amberley, have paid them frequent visits. There are tennis, bathing in the pond, chess, work in the garden, and conversation—above all conversation. The M's are very delightful people and attract a continuous and continuously changing concourse of guests, who drop in to tea or occupy a spare room in one or other of the cottages. The guests are very various; publishers and writers predominate, but there is a strong sporting element which comes down for tennis and an occasional cricket match, and there is always a sprinkling of agreeable young men attached to one or other of the M grand-daughters whom they are hoping to marry, or are about to marry, or have just succeeded in marrying.

On all my many visits to this place I have invariably met with courtesy and friendliness, and on occasion have been the grateful recipient of real kindness. Not only have I never been assailed by a cross word myself, but no cross word has ever been spoken in my hearing. The members of this family seem, indeed, to all appearance—and I have absolutely no ground for thinking the appearance misleading—to live in a tolerably complete amity.[1] My experience has led me to

[1] I know, of course, that, since they are human, they must have quarrelled on occasion. I have even heard of such quarrels. But relatively to the normal 'goings on' of the normal family the quarrels are so few, short, and mild that in the text I have ventured to neglect them altogether on the *de minimis non curat lex* principle.

regard this as a considerable achievement on the part of any family. Its value in this instance is enhanced by the reflection (*a*) that here is an exceptionally numerous family living in the country at very close quarters; (*b*) that three-quarters of those who are permanently in residence are women. One would have expected women to bicker over the household tasks. A would be alleged not to be pulling her weight in the matter of meal-preparing and washing-up; B to have borrowed C's whatnot without returning it; C to have had too many meals at D's expense; E to have monopolized the attention of F's visitor; F to have stolen G's young man, and so on. But nothing of the sort seemed to happen. The M's were not rich and with so many visitors a substantial amount of housework required to be done; but nobody ever complained that somebody was not doing her share, and everybody was in fact so willing to do more than her share that it often seemed as if there was not enough housework to go round. And these various services about the house were performed not ostentatiously, as by women so burdened with good works that they had no time for kindliness, or so anxious to establish their own virtue that they had contrived to rob of all virtue the service which they rendered, or moved to labour mightily and maliciously that they might the better throw into unfavourable relief the sinful idleness of others—but quietly, unobtrusively, as if the doing of what had to be done was a matter to be taken completely for granted. For though these women were unselfish, they did not parade their unselfishness as a banner, or use it as a vantage ground from which to deliver by their demeanour an unuttered charge of selfishness against everybody else. It is

difficult to make righteousness readable, and I despair of conveying the quality and texture of life as lived by the M's. The place and the people who live there are bathed in an atmosphere of their own, an atmosphere compounded of sympathy, gentleness and kindliness so palpable and distinctive that it shines like summer sunshine on all those who are fortunate enough to be admitted to its favoured company. To leave X and to re-enter the ordinary work-a-day world was to exchange summer for a bleak winter's day.

On this particular afternoon, against the lowering background of the international situation, the customary atmosphere was suffused with the melancholy which attaches to lovely and precious things already touched by the fingers of decay. It was a beautiful September afternoon, quiet and sunny, with just a hint of autumn in the air. Seeing the family gathered there for tea upon the lawn was like looking at a picture of one of those brightly lit domestic scenes which Vermeer and de Hooch loved to paint. There is a sunlit courtyard set with tables at which men are sitting, drinking, and talking; women are busy with household tasks, sweeping, washing, or laying the dishes; or they sit sewing and listen to the conversation of the men; or there is to be music and the players are tuning their instruments. The cosy, intimate scene suggests an atmosphere of quiet contentment which seems to have been as common in that age as it is alien to our own. Here, one felt, were people who were contented unless they had some positive reason for discontent, whereas our prevailing mood is one of discontent unless we have some positive reason for contentment. The quality of life at X was like the quality of the life lived

by the people in the Vermeer and de Hooch pictures. Here, too, there was contentment unless there were some positive reason for discontent.

And now the positive reason had arrived. Hence the suggestion of sunset about what I will venture to call the spiritual colours of the scene. The way of life, of which this family gathering was an expression, was to be broken. The men would be called to kill and to be killed, the women would be serving in canteens, driving ambulances, nursing, binding broken bodies. All would be dispersed, perhaps beyond chance of reassembling. Indeed, as I reminded myself, the way of life that I myself had known, so diversified with pleasant variety of living, with its talk and its work, its reading and its writing, its walking and riding, its tennis and chess and bridge, its eating and wine-drinking, and leisured love-making might already have gone past recall. The world of 1919 was very different from that of 1914. Who could doubt but that the world of 194– would be equally different from that of 1939? As I played chess on the sunlit lawn and looked around me at these agreeable people, I thought of the judgement upon mankind that I had read that morning in Fielding; of the similar judgements in Swift and Shaw. As applied to the M's and their friends, these judgements seemed to me to be grossly untrue. The two pictures simply failed to fit. This was what human life might be; this was what in favourable circumstances it actually on occasion was. Yet Swift, Fielding, and Shaw were not fools; on the contrary, they were men of profound wisdom and knowledge; judges of human nature with an eye for the reality that underlies the façade of manners and the pretensions of morals. Moreover, as I had

already noted, the utterances of those who were leading mankind bore out their estimate. The dictators—to look no nearer home—reproduced all the more shameful features of the portrait; and they were leading mankind to their destruction. At that very moment, under their leadership and at their command, thousands of human beings were utilizing the powers with which science had endowed them to kill one another with the maximum possible efficiency and in the largest possible numbers.

Assuredly the truth of the writers' picture could not be denied. And yet the existence of the M's and their manner of life seemed convincingly to deny it.

Puzzled anew by the enigma of human conduct, I pondered again the problem of evil. Were some people wholly evil and some largely good, or were all of us both good and evil, and did it depend wholly upon circumstances whether the virtuous or vicious sides of our natures came uppermost and expressed themselves in our lives? Before it was finished, the war would involve unimaginable horror and untold suffering. It has been my view in the past that nothing which a war was likely to achieve, nothing that any war has in fact achieved, is worth the horror and pain and loss involved in its achievement; but my view, I knew, was not shared by most of my contemporaries. What, then, I wondered, were the goods which in their estimation were to be achieved by this war? And were these goods such as to justify the mass murder of human beings which would be involved in their attainment? Did the ends in fact justify the means? Clearly the answer depended in part upon what the ends were. What, to put the same point rather differently, were the con-

siderations which seemed to my friends to render this war not only inevitable but just? Were they in fact valid considerations? If the answer to this question was affirmative, then although in supporting this war people might be mistaken, at least they were not necessarily wicked; they might be guilty of wrong judgement but not of vicious intent; in which case the strictures of Swift and Fielding would not be justified. At that moment I passionately wished to know whether they were justified or not. Where, I wondered, was I to find materials for an answer to the problem which perplexed me? I could not, I thought, do better than try by talking to friends and acquaintances to find what in their view were the reasons which made the war inevitable; the goods to be gained by it, and the ends which justified it. Not only would their statements throw light upon the question which troubled me touching the moral nature of man; they might help to define my own attitude. Hitherto I had held that war is never justified. Could I imagine any conclusion, could I conceive any result which would justify this one? The remainder of this book consists of the record of my inquiries and findings.

Chapter IV

THE GOOD PATRIOT

*

Let me begin with A. A is the editor of a highly respected and reasonably successful weekly journal. He is one of those literary Yorkshiremen who came as a young man to London to make his name, and within limits he has succeeded. He is popular and has a large number of friends, with whom he has his drinks and plays golf at the week-ends. At the club everybody welcomes the appearance of his cheerful, rubicund face. He bears bores gladly and one or two may usually be observed sticking to him. He is kindly, and prepared to go a considerable distance out of his way to help a friend. In short, a cheerful, eupeptic, decent chap, who thinks as well of everybody and everything as is compatible with a considerable native shrewdness. In politics he is what would once have been called a Liberal—he still calls himself a Liberal—but would now be termed a Social-democrat; that is to say, he believes that it is the business of the State to distribute continuous and increasing instalments of social good to its citizens, and believes further that, as the technique of production advances, the distribution

can and will become increasingly bountiful within the framework of the capitalist system. One day, when enough social good has been distributed, we shall wake up to notice that capitalism has incidentally been superseded, and that we are living under what is in effect a socialist system. In foreign politics he has been a vigorous supporter of the League of Nations and has consistently maintained that only on the basis of collective security can peace be securely founded. I have often heard him condemn the Treaty of Versailles, and, when times were quiet, I have even known him to profess a mild pacifism of the 'I hate war as much as anyone and I wouldn't for any consideration have another' type. But when he said this, the times were, indeed, very quiet, and even then his pacifism did not sit easily upon him. I found him extremely cheerful, full of energy, radiating optimism, and not in the least depressed by the fact of war. He could almost find it in his heart, he said, to be glad that it had at last come. Not being a novelist, I cannot hope to reproduce the style and manner of his speech, but this is the substance of what he said.

'I hate war as much as you do. Hatred of war is, indeed, in my bones. I fought in the last war and I hated that, and I am not going to like this one any better, merely because I am too old to feed the lice in the front line. It is not in any spirit of jubilation that one goes to war in these days, but rather as men go down to clean out a dirty drain. But mind you, the drain has got to be cleaned out. There is never again going to be a decent life for anyone, unless it is.'

I ventured to suggest that something of the same kind had been said twenty-five years ago.

'Yes, I know. There's nothing you can tell me about that. I know all about the hopes with which we went into the last war and their betrayal by a peace which sowed the seeds of this one. It is a story which we have all told one another until we are sick of it and nothing is to be gained by raking it over now. But we are not entitled to conclude that because the last war was fought in vain, therefore, the present war will be equally vain. After all, the last war did lead to the formation of the League, and though in the end the League failed, it very nearly did the trick. For my part, I have always believed in collective security; always thought that the one way to ensure peace in the world is to pool the arms of all in order to establish a force so strong that no aggressor would dare to challenge it. That, as I understand it, was the aim of the League, to supersede force as an instrument of policy, by making it abundantly clear that the use of force would no longer pay.

'Well, as I say, the League nearly did the trick, but luck was against it. There were at least half a dozen occasions between 1918 and 1935 when the League might have pulled itself together and built up a solid front against aggression, and each time somebody let it down; let it down with such invariable regularity that at times it looked as if some evil genius were watching over the League's destinies to ensure a fresh betrayal each time it looked like succeeding. When the French were pro-League, we were isolationist; when we were prepared for a strong League policy, the French backed out. Have you noticed, by the way, that we have never had pro-League governments in England and France at the same time?

'We could have established the authority of the League once and for all, had we been prepared to impose sanctions on the Japanese in 1931 at the beginning of the Manchurian affair; we could have established it by stopping Mussolini's Abyssinian adventure in 1935. Nothing would have been simpler than to have blocked the Suez canal to the passage of Italian ships and imposed the one sanction that mattered, the sanction on oil. I was always in favour of sanctions myself; so was the British public—look at the 1935 election which returned the present Government to power expressly to carry out a vigorous League policy. But the Admiralty was so frightened of losing a single one of its precious battleships that we always jibbed at the post and let Mussolini get away with it. I am saying all this not for the pleasure of raking up old scores against the Government, but to make my point that it wasn't by any means a foregone conclusion that the League was going to fail; that it only did in fact fail because again and again it was let down by a series of evil chances; and that, if it had succeeded, nobody would have been justified in saying that the last war was fought in vain. And, once again, I insist that the fact that it *was* fought in vain doesn't entitle us to conclude that the present war will be equally void of good.'

'Perhaps not,' I agreed. 'But the loss of millions of lives and the possible destruction of civilization is a pretty big stake to gamble on the offchance that good may come of it this time.'

'But, my dear chap, what else could we do? I ask you, what else *could* we do? We simply couldn't live any longer in the same world with the gangsters who are

running Germany. Nobody can say we haven't been tolerant, that we haven't given them every possible chance to behave, that we haven't borne with them to the point of foolhardiness. They rearm and introduce conscription. Well and good! They break the Treaty they signed, but it was a bad treaty, so well and good! They occupy the Rhineland; not so good, but after all, it is their own territory. They absorb Austria; a nasty business this, but the Austrians, I suppose *are* Germans, and who were we to prevent the union of Germans with Germans, especially after many of us had been grumbling for years about the injustices of Saint-Germain and Versailles? The same pretext could be and was advanced for the annexation of the Sudeten-German territories in Czechoslovakia, though I for one would have called Hitler's bluff at Munich. If it had turned out not to be bluff, we would have had the war a year earlier, but we should also have had the Czech army to fight on our side.

'Still, I am admitting that right up to last March *some sort of case* could be made out for all the steps in the Nazi advance. But when, on the flimsiest pretext, Hitler marched into Prague and took over Czechoslovakia, it became clear that all his professions about not wanting to rule over non-Germans were eyewash, and that his solemn asseverations that he had no more territorial claims to make in Europe were not worth the breath, the very generous breath—you know how the man shouts—he expended in making them; that his word was worthless; that he recognized no law but force; that he was incorrigibly aggressive, and that he had to be stopped. For after Prague all the other broken promises seemed to fit into place like the pieces

in a jigsaw puzzle; and a pretty ugly picture the completed puzzle makes.

'Just consider it for a moment. After saying that he had no designs on Austria, Hitler occupies Vienna and deprives the Austrians of the right of determining their own destiny. He breaks his word to Schuschnigg. In the spring of 1938 he was assuring the Czechs that no attack on Czechoslovakia was contemplated; by September he is already dismembering Czechoslovakia. Then, in spite of the often-repeated declaration about no more territorial claims in Europe, comes Memel; then Poland, Poland with whom he had voluntarily entered into an agreement in 1934 which required both countries to abstain from aggression for ten years.

'Apart from the fact that Hitler had not the vestige of a claim to Poland and that his invasion of Poland was a piece of open and shameless aggression, you will be pleased to remember that we had guaranteed Poland against precisely such aggression. You may say that we were foolish to have done this; you may say that we would have been better advised to make sure of those double-crossing Russians before guaranteeing a State which, without them, we could not easily assist. But none of that is to the point. The point is that we *had* guaranteed Poland and that we had to stand by our guarantee. And I would have you know that the guarantee was not by any means such foolishness as people have tried to make out. Once the League had broken down, the only chance of restraining Hitler lay in the formation of a block of States—what we all called at the time the Peace Bloc—pledged to resist aggression wherever and whenever it came. In that chain of resistant States Poland was an important

link. Another link even more important—many would have said essential—was Russia. But Russia had expressed herself as doubtful of our good faith. Were we, she was conceived to be asking, really serious in our alleged determination to resist aggression? Now obviously the best way to allay her doubts and to convince her of our seriousness, and the best way, therefore, of bringing her into the Peace Bloc was to guarantee Poland.

'I repeat that, once the guarantee was given, we simply had to stand by it. If at the last moment we had backed out, if we had contrived a super-Munich, our stock would have fallen so low that not only would no State have trusted us again, but every country in Europe, convinced of our cowardice and appalled by our treachery, would have hastened to make terms with Hitler while the going was good. Hitler would have penetrated the Balkans, strengthened himself with Hungarian wheat and Rumanian oil and made himself complete master of central and south-eastern Europe. France would have come next, and then ourselves. For don't comfort yourself with the illusion that Hitler's declaration that he had no quarrel with the French could be taken any more seriously than his assertion that he had no more territorial claims to make in Europe. So you see, if we *had* backed out this time, we should not have saved our skins; we should only have postponed the day of reckoning which would have come to us sooner or later, with a good chance of a beating when it came, which, I cannot help thinking, we should then thoroughly have deserved. For we should have ratted on the Poles and rats deserve to be beaten.'

I must have looked a little surprised at A's description of our countrymen as rats, even though it was only hypothetical.

'Yes, rats,' he repeated vehemently. 'I have only dealt so far with the issues of expediency which are involved, but don't suppose I don't think there are moral ones. If nations are not going to stand by their pledged word, the foundations of honourable dealing and decent living will be destroyed, and we may give up any hope that we have ever had of establishing a civilized society. It may surprise you to learn that some of us in this country value England's honour, which means that we really care that our country should keep her word. But'—he broke off—'I must apologize for that; I don't suppose for a moment that you care any less about the importance of fair dealing than I do. Only sometimes you pacifists talk as if you thought that no nation ever acknowledged any motive but its own self-interest, as if in the matter of greed, aggression, deceit, and general wickedness there was not a pin to choose between the lot. Well, I do assure you that England's reputation for honourable dealing does matter at least to some of us. And so, as I see it, we are fighting not only to preserve our own honour and to guarantee our good faith, but fighting against dishonour and bad faith as exemplified by one of the most unscrupulous and ruthless tyrannies that the world has ever seen. Surely even you must feel glad that at last the gloves are off, and that we can now wholeheartedly and openly denounce the Nazi régime for the beastly thing that it is.

'Just think for a moment of what the Nazis have done. Think of the long list of their crimes against

their own people, of the Beuthen murderers, of the blood purge of 1934, of the murder of Dolfuss, of the Jewish pogrom of 1938. Here is a régime which has dishonoured all that is best in the German people; it has exorcized culture, burnt books, exiled artists, scientists, writers, and philosophers, and made war upon the mind of man. Whatever in Germany was independent or individual, whatever distinguishes man from the beasts and the free man from the slave, it has persecuted, suppressed, or destroyed. It gags and muzzles its people; it taps telephones and opens letters; it sets spies and eavesdroppers to overhear and report upon the most casual conversation; it plants its secret police and their creatures in cafés, restaurants, shops, and even private households to arrest its citizens and imprison them without trial, or after a trial in a party court for offences hitherto unknown to any code of law; it toils and tortures its intellectuals to death in concentration camps; it forces its unfortunate victims to suppress at every moment the normal workings of the human intellect and the natural pulsations of the human heart.

'Under this régime everybody must do and think as their rulers bid them, under pain of the most savage penalties if they refuse. And what do their rulers bid them? To denounce freedom and glorify oppression, to hate peace and to praise war, to renounce truth, and to worship lies. Did you', A asked me, 'read Professor Banse's book?' I said that I had seen some extracts, but had not read the book itself. He went to the bookshelf and took it out. 'Listen to this,' he said. 'Banse is describing the man who is so contemptible as to love peace:

' "His dim lustreless eye betokens servility (which

does not rule out impertinence). His clumsy body is obviously built for toiling and stooping, his movements are slow and deliberate. This type is the born stay-at-home, small-minded, hopelessly bewildered by the smallest interruption of the normal course of events, looking at the whole world from the standpoint of his own little ego and judging it accordingly." "War", Banse goes on, "is an integral part of God's universe developing man's noblest attributes", from which it naturally follows that "the condemnation of war is immoral".

'Do you know Heinrich Hauser's recently published book, *Once Your Enemy*?' I shook my head. He picked out another volume and read:

' "First of all we must smash up the organizations of security. Security and insurance must be wholly taken away from us. No emergency exit must be left, no funk-hole into which a man may creep. Then, and not till then, will life be strong and simple again.

' "What is called barbarism is the power of life renewing itself. The so-called decline of Europe is a Phœnix rising from its ashes. We are the outposts of Europe to-day, yesterday, for the last thousand years. We must be ready to fight and we are ready, not only for ourselves and our people, but for the Europe whose heart we are."

'Hauser adds that "fighters should be lean and always hungry". One could multiply one's quotations indefinitely. They all point the same moral, all paint the same picture, the picture of a nation whose leaders habitually ridicule and despise decency, kindliness, culture, and mercy, and glorify brutality, ferocity, ruthlessness, and cruelty. Germans to-day are simply

not allowed to indulge in the normal feelings of decent humanity. Sorry to keep quoting books at you, but have you, by any chance, read Norah Waln's *Reaching for the Stars*?'

I said that it was in my library, but that I had not yet read it.

'Well, read it anyway; it is quite first-rate. Here is a kindly, competent Quaker woman, obviously determined to think as well of the Germans as she possibly can, but obviously also determined to tell the truth and to record precisely what she finds. Read the book and see what she does find. Quite early in the book she meets a Belgian woman who tells her how, after the last war, French, Belgian, and German women formed a league to bring up their sons never to kill one another. When the Nazis came to power the league was forcibly dissolved. The Nazis, it is clear, thought it a crime for their sons not to want to kill the sons of Frenchmen and Belgians.

'Here,' he continued, taking down a book from the music case above the piano, 'just listen to this carol which every child in a German school has to sing on New Year's Eve:

With the bells in the tower
Let us arise,
And fan the fires
Which to Heaven shall rise,
And bear our weapons—
For the Year is new:
War is the watchword,
Make the watchword true!

'Can you wonder that the present generation of

Germans grows up to be a living embodiment of hatred, and a walking epitome of violence? Look at their education! Apart from superiority of race, love of violence, and worship of war they are taught practically nothing. Everything that we know under the name of "the humanities" has simply disappeared from the German curriculum. The Nazis have abolished the Sixth Form from their schools, cut down the number of university students by more than half, and concentrated the whole of their studies upon science and technology.

'And what science it is. Take, for example, their new science of race! What is it but a farrago of pretentious dogmas based on a concocted anthropology and backed up by an artificial mythology? Listen to this from one of their books on *Rassenkunde*, their new study of race, by a certain Dr. Gauch. "We are thus", he writes, "able to establish the following principle: there exists no physical or psychological characteristic that would justify a differentiation of mankind from the animal world. The only differences that exist are between Nordic man, on the one hand, and animals in general, including non-Nordic men or sub-men (who are a transition species) on the other. Generally speaking, the Nordic race alone can emit sounds of untroubled clearness, whereas among non-Nordic men and races the pronunciation is impurer, the individual sounds are more confused and more like the noises made by animals, such as barking, snoring, sniffling, squeaking. . . . That birds can learn to talk better than other animals is explained by the fact that their mouths are Nordic in structure—that is to say, high, narrow, and short-tongued. . . . The shape of the Nordic gum

allows a superior movement of the tongue, which is the reason why Nordic talking and singing are fuller." If non-Nordics are more closely allied to monkeys and apes than to Nordics, why, one wants to know, is it possible for them to mate with Nordics and not with apes? Dr. Gauch's answer is impressive: "It has not been proved", he says, "that non-Nordics cannot mate with apes." '

'And who', I asked, 'is Dr. Gauch?'

'That', said A, 'is the point. Dr. Gauch is not, as you might suppose, some irresponsible idiot who has had his vapourings printed at his own expense in a book which nobody reads. He is a professor of ethnology, or rather of race culture, in a German university and his book is a text-book which it is incumbent upon all students of the subject to read.

'This Nazi régime is the eclipse of the mind, the death of the spirit, and the dark night of the soul. It is the greatest setback for humanity that history records or the mind can imagine. It is cruel. . . . I won't start talking about the horrors of the concentration camp, although I don't mind telling you that in the early days of the Nazi revolution I had to give up the *Manchester Guardian*, which printed fairly full reports of what was happening in Germany. After reading them I simply could not do my morning's work. . . . It is the enemy of culture; it has destroyed liberty; it distrusts thought and glorifies force, it knows no law but its own advantage; it desires and prepares for war, and it practises openly the most flagrant deception. It will stoop to any lie so long as it serves its turn, and break any promise which it has become irksome to keep. And that there may not be in anybody's mind the slightest

doubt as to what its real nature is, its Leader has taken good care to tell us in his wonderful book precisely what his aims are, and by what methods he intends to pursue them. Listen, for example, to this from *Mein Kampf*:

' "A clever conqueror will always, if possible, impose his demands on the conquered by instalments. For a people that makes a voluntary surrender saps its own character; and with such a people you can calculate that none of these oppressions in detail will supply quite enough reason for it to resort once more to arms. The more such extortions are suffered without resistance, the more unjustifiable it comes to seem to people to make any ultimate stand against pressures; which appear each to be new and isolated, though in fact there is a perpetual recurrence of them."

'Or to this:

' "The masses would sooner be dominated than supplicated, and feel more reassured by a doctrine that brooks no rival than by one which suffers a liberal freedom of choice. . . . Of the bare-faced intimidation practised upon their minds, or the violent outrage committed upon their human liberty, they are no more conscious than they are of the whole doctrine's fallacies. They see only the ruthless force and brutality of its determined assertions, to which in the end they always submit."

'Now I put it to you, how can one possibly make terms with a man like that, a man who not only assures you that he proposes to practise the most abominable wickednesses, but duly and punctually practises them according to plan? For six shameful years we have done our best to keep the peace with

Germany. We have held our tongues when the Nazis murdered civilization, and kept silent about things that made our blood boil. Because we hated the thought of war, we followed a policy of conciliation and appeasement, hoping that, when the more flagrant provisions of the Treaty of Versailles had been at last annulled, Hitler would be satisfied and settle down as a good European. For six years we let Hitler exploit our hatred of war as a weapon with which to blackmail us into condoning his aggression. And now we have had enough. Now, thank God, the muzzle is off at last and we can denounce these people for the horrors that they are and fight them with the only weapon they understand, the only weapon that is left to us. The time in fact has come to give them a taste of their own medicine—force.'

'And so', I said, 'your object in this war is quite simply to beat the Nazis.'

'No, it is not as simple as that. We have, I think, in this war a double aim, just as we have a double challenge to meet and a double duty to perform. First, in the interests of decency and civilization, we must destroy the Nazis. If there is ever again to be good and secure living, if civilized ways of thinking and behaving are ever to be restored to us, then this horrible rule of gangsters and thugs must be overthrown. Secondly, in the interests of self-preservation, if we don't wish to be left alone to face a Continent dominated by the Nazis, we must grapple with them and overthrow them before they grow any stronger. Eden expressed exactly what I feel when he said in his recent broadcast: "For us now there will be no turning back. We have no quarrel with the German people, but there can be no lasting

peace until Nazism, and all that it stands for, in oppression, cruelty and broken faith, is banished from the earth. This is an issue that admits of no compromise."

'And I don't mind telling you that I haven't a moment's doubt as to the issue of this war. We shall win, of course we shall win, because gangsterism always defeats itself in the end. The Nazi régime is only a passing phase. If we fight it to the best of our ability, then, though the cost in terms of suffering and loss of life may be enormous, we shall defeat it in the end. There are some things which are bigger than man, just as there are some things which are stronger than force, and my deepest conviction is that these things are bound to win.

'And if you like to take that as a confession of faith, then that is how you can take it.'

A was the sort of man who spoke rarely and with difficulty of the deeper issues, and I was impressed and moved. Here, it was obvious, was a decent man prepared to go to any lengths to rid the world of an infamy. But suppose that he failed, suppose that the very methods which he believed himself to be forced to adopt precluded the good that he was trying to achieve?

'When the war is done, what is to come after?' I asked him.

'It is early days', he said, 'to be talking of that. First of all, we must beat the Nazis and that is going to take us all our time. But, speaking for myself, if I didn't think that after all the welter of suffering we were going to make a new start and try once more to fashion the world afresh, I think I would shoot myself. The destruction of the Nazis—that is enough to justify this

war. But we can do more than justify it. We can make of it an instrument of good, break down the old barriers, get rid of the old distrusts and suspicions, and build a new Europe without divisions of class or nation.'

'Sounds like the covenant of a United States of Europe,' said I.

'Well, what if it does?' he replied.

COMMENT

Obviously A's intentions and motives must be rated high. I would give him 100 per cent for sincerity. He hated war, but he was convinced that the Nazis were anti-Christ and that they must be destroyed. He gave wholehearted endorsement to Mr. Chamberlain's account of the object of the war—'To rid Europe of the perpetual and recurring fear of German aggression, and enable the peoples of Europe to preserve their independence and their liberties.' He believed, in short, that we were fighting the war for a disinterested and a moral end.

Though I could not quite visualize this country in the rôle of the 'Hammer of God' for which A was apparently casting us—the remembrance of the last war and its aftermath was too fresh for that—I heartily endorsed his denunciation of the Nazi régime, and was inclined to agree that there could be no prospect of a quiet and civilized life for Europe while it remained in power. I could not, however, wholly share A's view that the way to overthrow Nazism was to threaten it and to fight it, any more than I was convinced that the most appropriate method of showing your disapproval of the use of force as a means of imposing one's will

upon others is to use it yourself. Nations embarking upon war have always proclaimed the virtuousness of their own motives and the viciousness of the enemy's. *They*, they have assured us, believe in reason and justice, while the *enemy* identifies justice with force. And therefore? Therefore the enemy must be shown that force does not pay. How? By using it, by using it—that is to say—effectively, in order to prove to him that its use is ineffective.

The dilemma is an old one and I do not wish to suggest that I know the way out of it. I content myself with pointing out that A seemed to be rather naïvely unaware of it. Nor was this, I reflected, the only paradox which A's answer to my questions entailed. I am no hand at character-drawing, but I hope that I have succeeded in conveying that A was what is known as 'a thoroughly decent chap', kindly, considerate, humane. One could not want a better friend, and, one might almost add, one could not make a better enemy.

As a good enemy he would be a fair and chivalrous fighter. When his adversary was up, he would go for him with all the ardour of his courage; when he was down, he would help him up again with all the gallantry of his humanity. There are many such chivalrous fighters on both sides in the present war. I had that day read of a U-boat commander who, having captured a trawler, discovered that there was no boat on board large enough to accommodate the crew; so he spared the trawler, put the crew back on board, and after destroying the wireless, sent it into port. In the last war a friend of mine who had been badly wounded was lying helpless in no-man's-land, where the advancing Germans presently found him. He was desperately

weak from loss of blood and was still bleeding profusely, and it was clear that, unless the flow was staunched, he would quickly bleed to death. In spite of the fact that the Germans were advancing over ground that was being shelled, an officer proposed to stop and bind up his wound; but the troops carried no bandages. What was to be done? The officer took off his shirt and one of his men took off his pants, and by means of these improvised bandages my friend's life was saved. Robert Lynd tells a story of Lord Dunsany who, after being shot in the fighting at the Four Courts in Dublin, was captured and carried inside. One of his captors, seeing how profusely he was losing blood, called out to a comrade: 'Hi, Johnny, go and fetch a doctor quick, or the poor fellow will bleed to death.'

In the war that recently raged for several years between Paraguay and Bolivia, a section of the defeated Bolivian army retreated into a forest which covers a large part of the province of Matto Grosso. For days nothing was heard of them. Then the Paraguayans captured a Bolivian prisoner and were appalled to hear from him of the direction the retreating column had taken; for the part of the jungle to which it had withdrawn was, they knew, completely waterless, and they feared that the Bolivians might die of thirst. Accordingly, they sent a column to find and to rescue them. When the rescue party came up with the retreating column, the Bolivians had water enough to last them for six hours more. The delighted Paraguayans gave their late enemies water, saved their lives, and brought them back in triumph.

Now this sort of thing doesn't make sense. It doesn't

make sense, for example, in the present war to be attacking an enemy aircraft when it crosses the coast, with a view to disabling it and, if possible, burning or blowing the pilot to pieces; to pursue the same tactics with the same objective, when it is a few hundred yards from the ground, to be still pursuing them when it is an inch or even a millimetre from the ground, but, directly it touches the ground, and the pilot steps out of his machine, to renounce the objective which one has hitherto been pursuing with all one's skill, all one's energy, and all one's courage, and, instead of burning or shooting the pilot, to give him food and drink and presently to carry him off to a comfortable country house where, in company with other German prisoners, he enjoys himself for the rest of the war, with not a complaint in the world except a tendency to obesity and the absence of Rhine wine and his accustomed cigars.

Why is it that men who at one moment are bending all their energies to destroy one another should at the next moment be equally zealous to preserve one another? Answer, presumably, because of circumstances; different sets of circumstances call into play different sets of instincts.

The behaviour of airmen to airmen reminds me of what W. H. Hudson tells us of the behaviour of a female robin. A cuckoo had laid an egg in the robin's nest, and Hudson describes how the young cuckoo manages to eject the little robins. The young cuckoo has, it seems, an extraordinarily sensitive spot in the middle of its back. Being the heaviest bird in the nest, it gravitates towards the bottom and the little robins tumble about all over its back. This is extremely painful to the cuckoo, which rears itself up on its legs in a

kind of epileptic fit, until it occupies practically the whole interior of the nest. As it rises, the little robins are lifted up on its back until they reach the lip of the nest. The cuckoo wriggles and presently they are pitched out. One falls on a leaf just in front of the opening of the nest and stays there. The mother comes back, feeds the cuckoo, but takes not the slightest notice of her own nestling. Why not? Because it is not in the accustomed place. The mother, having been conditioned to notice only what is in the nest, takes no notice of anything outside it. Hudson goes on to tell how the little robin, her own flesh and blood, lying helpless there on a leaf a couple of inches in front of its parent, gradually dies of cold, while all the energies of the mother are devoted to feeding the cuckoo. Let the little robin be in one spot and it is fed and cherished; let it be in another a couple of inches away, and it is neglected and dies. Let the airman be in one spot and he is pursued and killed; let him be in another a few yards lower down and he is cherished and fed.

As I say, it doesn't make sense. Yet A is precisely the sort of man who would take an active and unthinking part in the nonsense; who would kill, as a good airman should, when the enemy is in the air; and cherish and help, as a humane man should, when he is on the ground. Such behaviour is, I know, generally accepted among us as right and reasonable and most of us take it for granted. Yet I cannot give a person who cheerfully acquiesces in the paradox top marks for good sense. A, like the robin and like the airmen, is guilty of that supreme failure of our times, the failure to connect, a failure which comes from living and thinking in watertight compartments.

One further point: while A had convinced himself that the Nazis must be defeated, he was very far from having addressed his mind to the question what was to follow their defeat. What chance was there of building up a system which would prevent a recurrence of these appalling catastrophes, and what sort of system must it be? A had bestowed very little attention upon these matters. When they were put to him, he was a little apt to envelop himself in a blanket of woolly idealism, from the warm wrappings of which he emitted clouds of vague but elevated aspiration. He seemed, in fact, to be blind to the lessons of the remote, just as he had forgotten the moral of the recent past. Therefore, while I honoured A and knew him for a better man than myself, respected his motives and shared his aspirations, I could not give him very high marks for intelligence; 90 per cent for decency, 50 per cent for intelligence seemed to me to be about right.

Chapter I

THE WAR-WINNER

★

I proceed to B. B is one of my few titled acquaintances; he is in fact a knight. I don't know him very well, but I see him fairly frequently at the club, not at my club—few titled persons frequent my club—but at the club of a friend with whom I often lunch. B sometimes does us the honour of joining us after lunch and holds forth, over the coffee and liqueurs, on the topics of the day to us and anybody else who is willing to listen to him. He is a stout, plethoric sort of man, obviously overnourished. He has an admirable taste in food, drinks a great deal of wine, and is the fleshly embodiment of practically every tendency, movement, attitude, and policy that I hold to be mistaken and reactionary. It was he and his kind who insisted that Germany must be 'squeezed until the pips squeaked', and in the middle of the Versailles Conference sent Lloyd George the famous M.P.s' telegram forbidding mercy to the beaten foe and threatening L.G. with political ruin, if he evinced the least disposition to carve less then the full pound of flesh from the body of a prostrate Germany. B's is the

type of mind which was responsible for Versailles, for the cold shouldering of Soviet Russia, and the financing of the disreputable generals who invaded Russia after the war; which refused to accommodate or assist democratic Germany, while repeatedly truckling to Nazi Germany; which sabotaged the League; which connived at the Japanese invasion of China; which refused help to democratic Spain; which fought tooth and nail against the granting of a new constitution to India; which befriends oppression and assists reaction wherever it finds them, as surely as it attacks democracy and betrays freedom. Having encouraged Nazi Germany for years to believe that the English were benevolently indifferent, if not positively friendly to National Socialism and its ideals, he and his kind were now complaining of the perverseness shown by the Germans in fighting on behalf of ideals which they had given them every reason for supposing would never be challenged. Having done what they could to antagonize Russia for a quarter of a century and sabotaged the negotiations for the Anglo-Russian pact, they were now denouncing the treachery of a country which their supercilious reluctance had driven into the arms of the Nazis. B's tirades against this great power, whose attitude at the time was still officially neutral and whose future movements were in doubt, a power whose decisions were of vital importance to the welfare, indeed to the very existence, of the British Empire, I propose for reasons of discretion to omit, contenting myself with the remark that they constituted one of the strongest pieces of evidence for the truth of what may be generally termed 'the class war diagnosis' of our present discontents that has ever come my way.

I include B's statement in this book not because his motives for engaging in the war or his views on its objectives are worthy of record—the former being savage and the latter conventional—but because of his supreme contempt for our opponents and his sublime faith in our ability to beat them.

The circumstances in which the grounds for this contempt were explained to me were the following. I had been describing my own situation, marooned with a mad cook in Scotland, at the moment when I heard of the declaration of war. My account moved an elderly gentleman to remark that he, too, had been shooting grouse at the time, but had been forced to return as the shooting party had been abandoned.

'What an awful bore for you!' commented B, 'having to lose your shooting because of a beastly war.'

'But that isn't all,' said the elderly gentleman. 'I had got my woods in Oxfordshire better stocked up with pheasants than I have ever known 'em; put down at least a thousand, and now there's nobody to shoot 'em.'

'I shouldn't worry about that, if I were you,' said B. 'You will be shooting them all right by next autumn. The war will be over by the summer, if it lasts as long.'

Some of us expressed surprise; others dissent. The Russians had just invaded Poland and divided the spoils of that unhappy country between themselves and Germany. It looked to most of us as if it would be a very long war indeed.

'Not a bit of it,' said B. 'Personally I am glad the Russians have come in. I didn't much like the look of the war at the start, but I am going to enjoy it all right now we have got the Bolshies against us.'

'But how on earth', somebody asked, 'do you suppose that we are going to beat the Germans, if they have got Russia to back them? We only won the last war by blockading them, until we'd starved them out. What's the good of blockading them now, when they've a back door opening into the Russian larder?'

B was unimpressed. 'To begin with', he said, 'the Russians aren't going to let the Germans have any food. They can't, even if they wanted to. Have you ever heard that the standard of living in Russia is so high that the Bolshies have got any food to spare for anybody else? If it is, what are the bread queues for? And do you think that Stalin is such a fool as to supply the Germans with wheat when he hasn't got enough for his own people? Even if he had, is he going to supply them for nothing? Feed the Germans free and gratis? Not very likely! And if they are not going to get their food free, how do you suppose the Germans are going to pay for it? With their own currency? But it is almost worthless outside Germany, and they know that it is. And they have practically no foreign exchange.'

Somebody remarked that it was for supplies of raw materials, especially of oil, rather than for food that Germany would now be able to look to Russia.

But B made short work of this suggestion. 'I agree, of course,' he said, 'that the Germans cannot look anywhere else. If it doesn't come through Russia, there's not a scrap of essential raw materials, apart, of course, from Rumanian oil, which is going to get into Germany from any other quarter; which means that apart from Russia, the Germans will have to live on their existing stocks for as long as the war lasts. What is

Germany short of? Apart from foodstuffs, she is short of fats, oil, iron ore, manganese, non-ferrous metals, cotton, rubber, and certain rare metals such as tungsten, which are used in alloys to make explosives. The question is, how far can Russia make good her deficiencies in these respects? Let us begin with the commodities in regard to which Russia cannot help at all. These are the non-ferrous metals, cotton, and rubber, all of which Russia imports herself. This leaves fats, iron ore, manganese and oil. As to fats, Russia can only export these in the form of substitutes, or more precisely, in the form of soya beans from Manchuria. In a recent article in an American quarterly, *Foreign Affairs*, Professor Bruce C. Hopper of Harvard estimates that some 2,300,000 tons of these beans would be required to provide an amount equivalent to the vegetable oils which Germany imported in 1937. Of iron ore Russia produces an export surplus of only 1 per cent, and Professor Hopper estimates that it would take two years to reorganize the Russian iron industry in order to enable it to produce more. Of manganese, Russia exports a million tons, which may well be increased; here then, the Soviets can render important assistance.

'But by far the most important of all the raw materials involved is oil. Here Hopper is very illuminating. German war needs he estimates at over twelve and a half million tons a year, of which internal production accounts for about two and a half million. Rumania can provide roughly another two million; this leaves eight million to be made good from Russian sources. Now Russia's annual production of oil from all wells in the Soviet Union is about thirty million tons, of which, however, the most that has hitherto been ex-

ported in any one year is 1,200,000 tons. It is important to remember in this connection that shortages of oil inside Russia have been of frequent occurrence.

'But suppose for a moment, that Russia did produce a large exportable surplus of oil; how is it to be transported? The answer to this question brings us to the Russian railways. These, as everybody knows, are few and bad. Hopper estimates that there is only 45 per cent more railway track in Russia to-day than there was in 1913; but the amount of goods which has now to be carried over the Russian railways is at least four times what it was in 1913. Just before the war freight traffic on Russian railways was said to be the heaviest in the world; Hopper estimates it at three times that of Germany and the United States, and six times that of France. Now imagine these already overburdened railways saddled with the additional job of transporting soya beans 5,000 miles from Manchuria, oil 2,000 miles from the Caucasus, or manganese 1,200 miles from the Ukraine. They simply couldn't do it. They might perhaps manage to convey any one of these commodities to the frontier, either, that is to say, the soya beans or the manganese or the oil, but certainly not all of them; and certainly not, I should say, the eight million tons of oil which is the figure for Germany's requirements after she has absorbed the whole of the Rumanian supply. Moreover, the gauge of the Russian railways is, as you know, different from that of the German railways, so that Russian railways cannot take German rolling stock.

'One final point; the Baku oil is of poorish quality; at any rate it is not of the requisite quality for refining into petrol for use by aeroplanes. Now Rumanian

oil is of a very different quality, but that, as I have said, amounts to only two million exportable tons a year; and the Russians, as you have no doubt noticed, have taken very good care to string themselves out along the Rumanian frontier, thus effectively barring Germany's road to the Rumanian oil wells whenever they feel they would like the Rumanian oil stocks for themselves. The entry of the Russians is really a first-class thing for us. It entails the permanent withdrawal of several German army corps from the Western Front to keep an eye on the Bolshies in the east—don't make any mistake, Hitler has no illusions about the Russians and will watch them like a cat watching a mouse to see that they don't play any tricks; it keeps the Germans out of Hungary, Rumania and the Balkans generally, and shuts off their supply not only of food, but of what is much more important, petrol, except, of course, by permission of the Russians, without, so far as I can see, offering them any equivalent compensation for what they are going to lose. Of course, we shall have to fight the Russians after we have finished with the Germans—obviously we can't let them stay in Poland —but the fact that we have got *that* little account to settle after we have cooked Hitler's goose isn't going to help Hitler.

'You mark my word, this war is going to be decided in the air, and for effective work in the air you must have plenty of petrol. Armies used to fight on their stomachs; now they fight on their petrol tanks. I don't for a moment doubt that the Germans have stored up a pretty big reserve, but once the war really gets going, it will all be used up in six months and where are they going to get any more, with the Russians

bestriding the road to the south-east? Unless, of course, the Russians let the whole product of the Rumanian oil wells through, and I don't see them doing that.

'And while I am talking about air warfare, there is another thing. Their aeroplanes are no match for ours. They are not so fast; they are not so nimble, and they are not so powerful. It is not only that they are built of inferior materials; they are most of them of comparatively obsolete design. You see, the Germans started rearming several years before we did, and many of these Nazi planes go back to '35 or even to '34. The speed of development of modern aircraft would surprise you, a machine which is only a few years old being to all intents and purposes out of date to-day. I have just been to visit my nephew, who is a squadron commander, and saw some of his machines flying somewhere off the east coast. Believe me, there isn't a plane in the world that has got a dog's chance against them.'

'But aeroplanes don't win wars,' somebody said. 'The ultimate decision still rests with the infantry.'

'Well, what if it does? I have no great opinion of the German army myself. They were all right, of course, against the Poles, who had no equipment worth speaking of, but put them up against an enemy that can out-tank and out-machine gun them. Put them up even against a force which is equally well armed, and you will see that they will go to pieces. Who is the backbone of an infantry force? Why, the N.C.O. Now a good N.C.O. takes years to train. The Germans have only had an army of any size since '34, with the result that they've scarcely any decently trained N.C.O.s. The French army, of course, has been continuously in

being ever since the last war, with the result that they have plenty of properly trained officers, and, what matters even more, plenty of properly trained N.C.O.s. The long and short of it is that this Nazi army is not a patch on the 1914 lot, and they won't stand up for long to the French and the Tommies.'

'But suppose', I said, 'that some of the neutrals come in on the German side? It may be, as you say, that in a straight fight between the Germans, on the one hand, and the French and ourselves on the other, the Germans would crack. But now that they have succeeded in winning the benevolent neutrality of Russia, how do you know that Hungary and the Balkans may not come in with them, with Italy, as usual, enrolling on the side of the big battalions? I don't much relish the thought of England and France *contra mundum.*'

B was very short with me. 'That is the sort of defeatist talk that makes me sick. The Germans are the clumsiest diplomatists on God's earth, and you can bet your life that, if the war goes on long enough, which it won't, they will succeed in bringing everyone in against them, as they did in 1914. The Russian pact isn't really going to help them, as I have already told you. The net result so far is that the Nazis have lost about half Poland and are barred from the Balkans. No assets there! But look at the liabilities. In order to buy the Russians, Hitler has antagonized Japan, thereby setting free our hands in the East. Before the Russo-German pact, we should have had to send some considerable part of the fleet into the Pacific to keep the Japs out of Singapore and India. Now the Japs won't stir a finger against us, and we can use all our ships to mop up the submarines, which we are doing very

nicely. But it is not only the Japs that Hitler has lost; he has transformed Italy, who is of course terrified of Russian influence in the Balkans, from an ally into a neutral, and mortally offended Franco's Spain, not to speak of the Pope. No, the Russian pact was the biggest mistake of his life, and all the chickens haven't come home to roost yet.

'By and large, I wouldn't give twopence for Germany's chances in this war. On top of all the other things I have mentioned, just consider what the effect of the blockade is going to be. The Germans have been on short commons for years, and short commons mean strained nerves. So far as stomachs and nerves are concerned, they are starting this war not from where they were in 1914, but from where they were somewhere about the end of 1917; that is to say, they are already precious near the end of their nervous resources and simply cannot stand the strain of a long war. This isn't only a war of machines; it is a war of *morale* and in *morale* we have the advantage of them every time. I wouldn't mind wagering that before twelve months are over, everyone of those gangsters who are running the show in Germany now will be bumped off, and when once the Nazi leaders begin to be bumped off the end will be in sight. The devil of it is that the end will probably be some sort of revolution; which means that we shall have a fresh batch of Bolshies on our hands. Still, we can take on the lot, Russians and Germans, if it comes to that. So, my guess is that they will be on their knees shouting "Kamerad" in twelve months, and then, by God, we will give them hell.'

COMMENT

As to the value of B's estimate of our chances, I am not in a position to express any opinion. I had heard prophecies as gloomy as his were sanguine urged with apparently equal knowledge and authority. But, while there might be two opinions as to his judgement, there could, I felt, be only one as to his wishes. He wanted to punish the Germans until they squealed for mercy; and after the Germans, the Russians. In B at least, I thought, the king of Brobdingnag was justified.

Chapter VI

THE HATERESS OF HUNS

★

Further testimony in support of the Fielding-Swift-Shaw estimate of human nature was kindly afforded by Mrs. C. Mrs. C is the great lady of a country village. She is fat and forty, kindly but domineering, likes to play the lady bountiful, and, provided her bounty is recognized with sufficient gratitude, does so. She is a staunch Tory, has a vast contempt for Liberals, Socialists, Pacifists, and progressive persons generally, and an almost equal contempt for the present generation, which she regards as decadent and slack. She has always expressed a strong disapproval of the Government for its lack of energy and decision, which she has habitually contrasted with the energetic aggressiveness of the Nazis. 'Chamberlain', she once told me, 'takes week-ends in the country; but Hitler', she added admiringly, 'takes countries at the week-end.'

On the occasion when I was fortunate enough to be favoured with her views she accosted me in the village street and haled me in to tea. Almost at once she began to rally me. 'Well, what about your pacifism now?

It is a pretty figure you and your pacifist friends are cutting. When will you have the sense to learn that human beings really enjoy fighting and that nothing you can say or do will ever make them give it up? Just as well too! Pretty slack we should all of us get, unless we did have something to brace us up and remind us of our duty to ourselves and our country. Now that the war has come, perhaps you will admit what I've always told you, that the whole of the last twenty-five years has been nothing but a prolonged armistice. We are not fighting a new war to-day; we are only continuing the old one after a break. Well, it's not been a bad armistice in its way, but only fools would allow themselves to think that anything that has been said and done during these last twenty-five years has made any difference to the reality of the situation, which is that we have all of us been gradually getting up enough steam to enable us to fight one another again.

'Your mistake, of course, was to think that what the politicians and the publicists said, the constitutions they devised, the Leagues they formed, the pacts they signed, and all the treaties and the talking and the planning, really made any difference. As if one could stop war by making speeches! You thought one could stop war by bringing the nations together in the League—I believe that some sort of committee is still sitting at Geneva, but who pays the slightest attention to it? You thought that you could stop war by persuading young men not to fight for their King and Country. I wonder how many of those who voted for that ignominious resolution are with the colours to-day? You thought you could stop war by supporting

the Peace Pledge Union and inducing hundreds of thousands of people to renounce war and to swear they would "never take part in another". Where are the hundreds of thousands now? After the last war the young chaps—you, I daresay, among them—were very bitter against the old. "Never again", they said, "would they be led into the shambles by the old men." I don't know precisely what is the average age of the present Cabinet; nearer seventy than sixty, I should imagine . . . Words, words, words! They never meant very much and to-day we have scattered them to the winds and returned to reality. "Old Bill" is already making his silly jokes again all over the picture papers, and the gallant little Finns have replaced the gallant little Belgians. You can hear people in trains saying that one can't trust Hitler, and that this time we must give the Germans a lesson and fight them to the finish. Twenty-five years ago it was the Kaiser and not Hitler they couldn't trust, and twenty-five years ago we were also giving the Germans a lesson and fighting them to the finish.

'When will you and your sort learn the true meaning of all this, which is that fighting is natural to man? War of some kind or other has, I believe, been going on somewhere in Europe for between 70 and 80 per cent of the last thousand years. Man likes killing birds, rabbits, foxes, and stags; but even more than he likes killing birds, rabbits, foxes, and stags does he like killing other men. That is why we shall always have wars. And what is more, we should run to seed if we didn't.'

'How you must admire the Germans,' I said, 'and look up to them as a grateful pupil to his master; the Germans, who have continuously preached the doc-

trine that war between human beings is inevitable because that is what human beings are like; and that it is also salutary because, if they didn't continuously fight, human beings would become like something different and, presumably, like something worse. Do you remember Bernhardi, for example, whom we were all anathematizing at the beginning of the last war, with his "War is a biological necessity, an indispensable regulator in the life of mankind; failing which would result a course of evolution delcterious to the species and, too, utterly antagonistic to all culture"? In spite of the lessons we were said to have taught them, the Germans have never really given up saying this sort of thing, and, since the Nazi régime came into power, they have been saying it again good and proper. Listen, for example, to the *Deutsche Wehr*, the professional journal of Hitler's Officer Corps: "A new world", says its leader-writer, "has come into being for which war is frankly a postulate, the measure of all things, and in which the soldier lays down the law and rules the roost. . . . Every human and social activity is justified only when it aids preparation for war." And if somebody were to object that this is barbarism, the Germans would agree that it is, and cheer loudly, because they glory in barbarism. Here's a book I have just been reading by a man called Heinrich Hauser, entitled *Once Your Enemy*. He praises danger and insecurity, glorifies pain, and apparently agrees with you that these things are necessary to maintain the vitality of a race. Unless from time to time we devoted all our energies to hunting and killing one another, we should apparently go to bits.'

I then regaled Mrs. C. with some of the better pas-

sages from Hauser which A had already retailed to me.[1]

Mrs. C was very angry. 'Don't talk to me about Germans,' she said. 'Of course, I don't hold with any of the views of those perverted morons. There's only one thing to be said about the Germans, and that is that they are savages and beasts, and that they've got to be destroyed. There is no other way of dealing with them. We let them off in 1914 and we have paid for our mistake ever since. There must be no mistake this time.'

'Do you think, then,' I asked her, 'that it is quite impossible for us to live in peace with Germany?'

'Quite!' Mrs. C was most emphatic. 'The Germans are not like any other people. For one thing they are not civilized, as we understand civilization. That has been one of our greatest mistakes all along—to treat them as if they were. I remember when I was in Berlin about the time of the Nazi revolution, a very distinguished diplomat who had lived in Germany for years saying to me: "This is not a normal civilized country, and the German government is not a normal civilized government and cannot be dealt with as if it were one."

'Of course the Germans are gifted, greatly gifted. Look at their music; practically all the music that one wants to hear was written by Germans'—Mrs. C, I should have said, is extremely musical and has admirable taste. 'Also they are very kind. I don't know another country in the world where such a fuss is made about children and animals. They are generous, too, and hospitable. I have never seen Christmas kept

[1] See page 61.

up anywhere as well as it is in Germany. But these superficial virtues of theirs only make them the more dangerous by serving to mask their essential brutishness. Those blue eyes seem full of honesty and candour; those smooth, pink countenances to be completely devoid of guile; that smile, so simple and innocent, cannot, one feels, possibly deceive; yet behind these smooth, smiling faces there lurks the mind of a devil and the instincts of swine. The Germans in fact are brute, blond beasts who use their reasons only to further their bestiality.

'Look at their sexual perversions! Was there ever such a place for sexual beastliness as Berlin before the Nazis cleaned it up? You know. . . . Well, I daresay you know as well as I do,' Mrs. C conceded. 'Or take another thing—though I daresay it's the same thing at bottom. Was there ever a people who took such a delight in whipping? The only difference that the Nazis made was that, after 1933 whipping for a sexual kick became whipping in real earnest. Some of the things that they have done to Jews in concentration camps make one's blood run cold. Right at the beginning of the Nazi affair I had a letter from a young chap I used to know—my husband and I met him at winter sports one year and he became quite a friend of ours. He had apparently been arrested, taken to some Brown House and beaten up. Somehow or other he had got away and was in hiding in the Bavarian mountains when his letter reached me. What he wanted to know was whether my husband'—Mr. C, I should have said, is the director of a firm of publishers —'would commission him to do a book describing conditions in Germany. Well, none of this is very much to

the point; the point was in the postscript which, as far as I can remember, ran like this: "I would so like to meet you and others of my friends in England again. But I am afraid I can never permit myself to do this, as I have only half my face left." That's a nice thing to read in a letter! I couldn't stop thinking about the poor chap for days afterwards.

'Well, that shows you what the Germans are like, and if that weren't enough, what about Dachau and Buchenwald and the Government's White Paper?' Mrs. C proceeded with a sort of satanic gusto to give detailed particulars of the German concentration camps.

'Now this sort of people', she concluded, 'simply oughn't to be allowed to go on living. They are a disgrace to humanity. In fact, they aren't human at all, but beasts, and, being beasts, the whip is the only thing they can understand. It's one of their own precious thinkers who recommended them to take their whip to a woman. Well, I'd treat them with their own medicine and talk to them in the only language that they will listen to, which is that of force. You can only cow a bully and a beast by force.

'Have you ever heard a German audience on the radio cheering Hitler or Goebbels or Goering, or any of the others of the gang? "Sieg Heil, Sieg Heil," they bark, exactly like a lot of wild beasts. One might be listening to the animals at the Zoo. The only difference is that while the beasts don't bark in time, the Germans do. The Germans, you see, are disciplined beasts. They are the most thoroughly disciplined people in the world, and now they are welded by discipline into a single, solid force of destruction. Look at what they have done to Austria, to Czechoslovakia, and now to

Poland. Well, that's what they are planning to do to us. And what do you imagine it would be like to have those devils over here, opening one's letters, tapping one's telephones, poking their noses into one's affairs, and drilling and barking "Sieg Heil" and flogging and torturing. No, there's nothing else for it—they have got to be destroyed. We have let them off too often, and this time we shan't stop until we have destroyed them root and branch.'

'How', I asked, 'do you propose to destroy them?'

Her eyes gleamed. 'I would make a real Carthaginian peace, raze their cities to the ground, plough up the land and sow it afterwards with salt; and I would kill off one out of every five German women, so that they stopped breeding so many little Huns; and I would break up the German Reich into twenty little States and set them at one another's throats. If the Germans must fight, let them prey on one another.'

COMMENT

Mrs. C appeared to me to be beside herself with anger, and vicious with hatred and malice. Like B she wanted to make the Germans squeal and, broadly speaking, that was all that she wanted. Moreover, she was so obsessed with the special and peculiar wickedness and the incorrigible aggressiveness of the Germans, that she failed entirely to notice (1) that if her general view of mankind were true, the Germans were in no way peculiar and were incorrigibly aggressive only in the sense in which all human beings were incorrigibly aggressive. For, if man is by nature a fighting animal whom nothing can tame, if beneath the veneer of civilization he is still, and always will be, the

palaeolithic savage, vain, gullible, boastful, and also cruel, ferocious, and vindictive, then recurrent wars are as inevitable as recurrent seasons, and Germans differ from other human beings, if they differ at all, only in realizing more fully and exhibiting more clearly the qualities and characteristics which are common to all mankind. They are, in other words, the most thoroughly human of humans, the most *manly* of men; (2) that her proposal to kill off one out of every five German women argued a degree of ferocity equal to, if not in excess of, anything she had attributed to the Germans. Mrs. C was, indeed, sublimely savage and her savagery had not only extinguished her humanity, it had darkened her wits so that, when she contradicted herself by first falsely attributing certain characteristics to all mankind and then proceeding to revile the Germans for having precisely those characteristics, she was wholly unable to detect the contradiction. My first conclusion was that by this specimen at least the Shaw-Swift-Fielding view of human nature was triumphantly vindicated.

I concluded, secondly, that, as the war proceeded, the number of such specimens would be liable to increase. Already Mr. Churchill was reviving the appellation 'Huns'; already letters were appearing in papers referring to the 'bestial individuals who make up the population of Germany', and demanding their annihilation. 'Quite frankly,' one such letter reads, 'I would annihilate every living thing, man, woman, and child, beast, bird and insect; in fact, I would not leave a blade of grass growing even; Germany should be laid more desolate than the Sahara desert, if I could have my way.'

Swift, I felt, would have been delighted. 'Just so,' Fielding's Man of the Hill would have commented, 'that is just how I should expect the creatures to go on, spitting envy, hatred, and malice, and glorying in their viciousness.' Shaw's Ancient would have shrugged her shoulders and turned away.

Chapter VII

THE REASONABLE PACIFIST

★

My next encounter was with D. I had known D for many years as a convinced but intelligent pacifist. Throughout the period of our acquaintance he had vociferously maintained a violent objection to war, which he had consistently denounced as the greatest of evils, and I was anxious to see how his pacifism was standing the test of this one. For, although he was a pacifist, D was a pacifist of a rather unusual kind. His pacifism was not based on religious grounds, since he was an avowed agnostic; in fact, I had heard him maintain that the less the Almighty interfered with the conduct of human affairs, the better he was pleased. He had often, he said, noticed that trouble seemed invariably to follow when God appeared to be interesting Himself in foreign politics. He was an avowed anti-clerical who delighted to accumulate some of the more outstanding ecclesiastical wartime *bêtises*. The gem of his collection, which I had often heard him quote, was the remark of an English bishop during the war of 1914–18 to the effect that though God could not stop the European war, he did

the next best thing by providing a million British recruits.

Again, it was not on principle that D objected to war. When taxed on the matter he said that he didn't know what a principle was, unless it was a piece of mummified thought which people trotted out, in season and out, to save them the trouble of thinking for themselves. Thus he did not maintain the principle or the sacredness of human life. Indeed, he was a member of the Society for the Promotion of Easy Death. He supported his advocacy of euthanasia on the ground that, although we did not know whether death was evil or not, since no person who had ever experienced death had given us a report on his experience—if one was to return as a spirit to describe life in the hereafter then, *ex hypothesi*, he couldn't be dead—we knew for a certainty that pain was an evil. We had no right, then, to deny to a man who was suffering from the certain evil of pain, the substitution of the doubtful evil—which, for all we knew to the contrary, might be a good—of death. Similarly, he advocated the removal of the penalties upon suicide on the ground that a man's life was his own to do as he liked with, and that, as he did not ask for it, he was under no obligation to make the best of it, and powerfully demanded the repeal of the laws penalizing abortion on the ground that it was sheer hypocrisy on the part of a State, whose main use for its citizens appeared to be to send them to kill and to be killed upon the battlefield, to seek to interfere with a mother's right of determining whether they should or should not be born to be killed. Apart altogether from his vindication of a mother's right to deny to an unwanted child the life which a modern

State appeared to be so anxious to take, he was wholeheartedly in favour of limiting the population as a method of diminishing the chances of war. 'Of course,' as he once put it to me, 'all nations now insist upon having large populations in order to protect themselves against their neighbours. Consequently Mussolini gives prizes to the mothers of many babies and Hitler kicks bachelors out of the German Civil Service. But at the same time I notice that it is frequently alleged that one of the causes of war is the pressure of expanding populations. The Japanese, for example, go to war with China in order to found an empire to which surplus Japs can be sent. The Germans demand colonies and turn Europe upside down because they want more *Lebensraum*. But if nations have no populations to expand, I cannot see why other nations should require large populations to protect them against the results of their neighbours' expansion. Human beings have always shown a regrettable tendency to multiply, and various methods have had to be devised to restrain their multiplication. The three most popular hitherto have been war, pestilence, and famine. For these I would recommend birth control and abortion as modern substitutes; they are less painful, less productive of misery, and less harmful to virtue.'

I have inserted this argument as typical of D's attitude, which I should describe as an unrelenting application of reason to every form of subject matter which was presented to him, including subjects such as war, which are not usually considered suitable for the exercise of that faculty.

Withal D was as unlike the traditional picture of the pacifist as can well be imagined. By profession a psy-

chologist who had made a considerable reputation for himself by original work on his subject, he was a man who had lived hard and touched life at many points. He was red in the face, where the ordinary pacifist was pale; he smoked and drank, while the ordinary pacifist did neither; he prided himself upon his taste as a *gourmet*, while the ordinary pacifist supported life on lettuce, rusks and rice, and was a good shot who enjoyed taking the life of pheasants, grouse and rabbits, while the ordinary pacifist was professing his unwillingness to hurt a fly. He had, it was whispered by his enemies, even hunted; but the allegation was indignantly denied by his friends; the hunt, which they admitted D had attended, was, they said, only a 'drag'. D, who was reasonably athletic, had played tennis at Wimbledon at a time when the ordinary pacifist was still serving double faults under-hand, and had obtained a half blue for hockey when the ordinary pacifist had not even risen to the offence of 'sticks'. Finally D had a rather unsavoury reputation for amorous adventures, and while the ordinary pacifist slept chastely in the bed of one woman who was his wife, D was reported to have sullied the sheets of many who were not.

In sum, while the ordinary pacifist was meek, mousey, given to taking the back seat and refusing to say 'Bo to a goose', D was aggressive, self-assertive, competitive and self-confident. On the whole, he had done very well for himself in the world and had every reason to be pleased with the society that had rewarded him.

My interview with D occurred shortly after the rejection—it amounted to that, though it was never described as such—of Hitler's so-called 'peace offen-

sive'. I asked D whether he would have been in favour of accepting. 'Yes, of course,' he said. 'As a pacifist of God knows how many years standing, I hold that there are only two sensible precepts about war: the first is that it should never be begun; the second, that if it is begun, it should be stopped. I won't bore you with my grounds for these assertions, the pacifist case being now pretty familiar even to those who do not agree with it. Broadly speaking, however, they are all reducible to two.

'The first is a matter of common sense. I have never been able to see why it should be supposed that a war settles anything except which is the stronger of the two belligerents. Why should it? One nation has a quarrel with another and, believing itself to be in the right, sets out to establish the superior justice of its cause. By what method? By killing off as many members of the opposing nation as it possibly can. If it succeeds in killing more of the enemy's citizens than the enemy has succeeded in killing of its own nationals, it is held in some mysterious way to have established the rightness of its cause and demonstrated its superior virtue. But this is precisely what it has not done. What it has in fact demonstrated is not its superior right, but its superior might. Now we have not yet reached the point of identifying (at any rate openly) right with might, so the beginning of common sense on the subject of the war is to abstain from dressing up the business of killing in moral sentiments. War has nothing to do with right, justice, liberty, or morality. It has to do simply with superior efficiency in the art of slaughter. A militarily powerful nation is a nation which is more successful in slaughtering than a militarily weak

nation; under modern conditions one must, I suppose, add that its citizens are imbued with superior *morale*, which means that they are willing to die quietly and to suffer uncomplainingly without lynching the government that is responsible for their sufferings, for a longer period than a people imbued with inferior *morale*. What I mean, then, when I say that war never settles anything is that it never settles anything that it is supposed to settle. You don't, I hope, expect me to take you all through history and demonstrate the truth of this generalization in relation to each and every one of the wars which disgrace its pages. Besides, the generalization wasn't always true. So long as societies were comparatively simple and their relations chiefly governed by violence, wars did in fact settle things. They settled, for example, such questions as who should possess wells in the desert; or they settled whether a rough hardy people from the mountains should change their habitat and live among the people of the plains whom they had conquered, becoming in due course as a result a different people following new and more civilized modes of life.

'But when civilization develops and the relations between societies become complex, war ceases even to be responsible for such "settlement" as is entailed by the displacement of a population. France and Germany fought over Alsace in 1870 and again from 1914 to 1918; as a result of these wars Alsace, which had been French, became German and then again returned to France. But these political changes have no relevance to the conditions of the lives actually lived by the people of Alsace, who continue mating and getting and tilling the soil and tending the vines and looking

after their shops and their businesses, in blissful indifference to the name and nature of the State which, at any particular moment, claims the ownership of their community. Thus what the war of 1870 settled, and all that it settled, was that Germans were more successful in killing Frenchmen than Frenchmen in killing Germans; just as what the war of 1914–18 settled, and just as all that it settled, was that Frenchmen were more successful in killing Germans than Germans Frenchmen.

'Look for a moment in this connection at the last war. Why was the last war fought? To "Protect the rights of small nations". But after the war fragments of nations were hacked off the national stock to which they had for centuries belonged and forcibly grafted on to the stem of some other nation, the stresses and strains resulting from this arbitrary operation having kept Europe in a ferment ever since. To make "England a land fit for heroes to live in." But at any time since the last war heroes to the number of no less than a million can be seen at large in the streets, selling matches and bootlaces, and performing—how lamentably—upon musical instruments, in the endeavour to augment the pittance with which the community rewarded them for making it a suitable abode for the heroes who had saved it.

' "To preserve democracy." But after the war democracy went permanently into eclipse, with the result that three-fourths of the inhabitants of Europe, in Germany, in Italy, in Spain, in Yugoslavia, in Poland, in Rumania, and in Russia, are living under the autocratic rule of more or less open dictatorships.

' "To put an end to war." But in no single year since

the last war has England spent less than £100 millions in preparing for the next; I don't remember the amount of our expenditure in the last year of peace—somewhere about £400 millions, I believe, that is to say, rather more than £300 millions more than we spent in any single year, before we had finally put an end to war by winning the war to end it.'

'But all these', I said, 'were ideals; they were not immediate war objectives; or, if you like to be cynical, they were the façade of propaganda designed to instil energy into our people by making them believe that they were fighting for something worth while, and to impress neutral and especially American opinion. The real aim of the last war was to beat the Germans, whose ambitions were threatening our safety, and that, after all, we did succeed in doing.'

'I agree with you,' said D, 'that what we were really out for in the last war was to beat the Germans. "Putting an end to German militarism", if I remember, was what we used to call it; but I cannot for a moment agree that our successful termination of the 1914–18 war produced this result. Consider for a moment the position in 1914 and compare it with the position as it is now. In 1914 Germany was manifestly bidding for the hegemony of Europe, overawing small nations, identifying might with right and threatening, or so it was thought, the security of Britain. Faced by this situation, we said, in effect, that this was a state of affairs that we could not tolerate, and decided that Germany must at any cost be stopped. Accordingly we went to war to humble the might of Germany, to show her that force did not pay, and to establish the rule of right in the world. After four and a quarter years of

prodigious efforts and appalling suffering we won, and, remembering the ordeal through which we had passed, "This", we said, "must never happen again." In order to prevent it from happening again, we weakened and humiliated Germany to the full extent of our power. We sank the German navy to the bottom of the sea: we reduced the great German army to a police force of some 100,000 men; we lopped off parts of the German Reich and established them as independent States under the League or attached them to other States; we effectually separated Germany from Austria. For six months after the Armistice we continued to starve the Germans by our blockade with consequences to the German children whose results may be seen twenty years after in the young Nazis of to-day. We exacted by way of indemnity reparations which were so preposterous in amount that not only were they never paid, but, when we had recovered from the blinding effects of anger and lust for revenge, we never even expected that they would be paid. In a word, and the word shall be Sir Eric Geddes's, we "squeezed Germany until the pips squeaked." Short of making a real Carthaginian peace, short, that is to say, of obliterating the towns of Germany as Carthage was obliterated, of killing German women and deliberately starving the Hun babies—this last suggestion was in fact seriously and widely made by large numbers of excited Englishmen at the close of the last war—so that there could be no future generation to plan revenge—short, I say, of doing these things, it is difficult to see what further steps we could have taken to weaken and to humiliate our late enemy. When the war was over, the Allies continued to hold Germany down. The French

encircled her with a network of satellite powers, established the Saar as an independent State under the auspices of the League, occupied the Rhineland and invaded the Ruhr. Germany was for years excluded from the League of Nations; her middle class was ruined by the inflation of the mark; her unemployment rose to appalling proportions. . . .

'Twenty years after, Germany is again strong, again bidding for the hegemony of Europe, again proclaiming might to be right, again overawing and threatening to crush small nations. The parts which we lopped off she has reattached or is threatening to reattach; Austria she has absorbed. And the moral! That you cannot keep down a vigorous and aggressive nation by the use of force; that, if you try, although you may obtain a temporary victory, your success will be sooner or later wiped out by the determination of the vanquished to build up a force superior to that by means of which your victory was won. You cannot in fact cast out Satan by Satan; you cannot overcome force by force, except the force be that of law. That you cannot, I should contend, is both the conclusion of history and the teaching of morals; and the events of the last few years, from the German occupation of Austria to the absorption of Czechoslovakia, from the taking over of Memel and Danzig to the overrunning of Poland, culminating in another war between groups of rival military and imperialist powers, each seeking to overcome the other, but each pretending that it is acting in the interests of peace and justice, constitute convincing proof of my contention.

'So much for my common-sense argument against war. I oppose war in all circumstances because it

doesn't settle anything, because it doesn't do any good, and because, while it doesn't do any good, the harm that it does is immeasurable.

'That brings me to my second group of reasons, which I will call, for short, reasons of value. It always seems to me that the willingness to go to war involves a monstrous perversion of values, as a result of which men suddenly stop caring about the things that are really important to them, happiness and freedom and home and comfort and the right to live their lives in their own way, and begin instead to care about things which are indifferent or unreal, such as national greatness, military glory and prestige, the honour of the country, and the pledged words of politicians, or about things positively harmful, such as the punishment of the enemy, that is to say, the infliction of pain upon human beings. According to this scale of values the things that are real, men's blood and women's tears, are dismissed as unimportant; the things that are unreal, national interests, historic rights, sacred missions, the acquisition of a colony or naval base, or the deposition of a government in another country, become important. Now, for my part, I am totally unable to see how any of these ends for which States profess to fight are worth a single man's blood or a single woman's tears. States, after all, are composed of men and women and it is, as I see it, their job to ensure the happiness and the wellbeing of the men and women who compose them. How, then, can they be justified in sacrificing that happiness in the interests of some abstract objective of their own?

'Just think for a moment of the extent and variety of the suffering that war entails. In the last war some

ten million young men were killed and some twenty million permanently maimed and mutilated. In the plagues and famines that closely followed upon the war, more people lost their lives than in the war itself. More terror and agony were experienced in the space of four years than in the hundred years that had preceded them. Men were burned and tortured; they were impaled, blinded, disembowelled, blown to fragments; they hung shrieking for days and nights on barbed-wire entanglements with their insides protruding, praying for a chance bullet to put an end to their agony; parts of their faces were blown away and they continued to live. . . .

'But the appalling tale of sheer physical agony was only a part of the suffering war involved. Discomfort of every kind was the lot of millions of men for four and a quarter years. There was the discomfort of ill-fitting clothes and boots, the discomfort of coarse food, the discomfort of never being alone, the discomforts of damp, of mud, of rats and lice. Above all, there was the discomfort of unspeakable boredom. Many men, looking back on the war, will tell you that the sheer boredom of it was its most terrible feature. I do not believe that they are right in this—there is a convention that it is discreditable to confess to fear or pain; but nobody minds admitting to feeling bored—yet, if the tale of all the varied miseries inflicted by the war could be told, the waiting, the lack of reasonable occupation, the being packed up and sent hither and thither as if one were a bale of merchandise, the appalling squandering of knowledge and skill, and the wasted talents of mind and body will be a heavy item in the account.

'I have spoken thus far only of the combatants. What the war involved for those who suffered at home, to mothers and lovers and wives, the partings, the breaking-up of homes, the loneliness, the ever-present dread, the still ache of hope deferred, the sharp pain of hope extinguished, all this and more, the full tale of the war's misery, it is beyond the power of human imagination to conceive. . . . Now these are the things that seem to me to matter, to matter so much that no single one of the doubtful goods which victory in war professes to achieve—and, as I have pointed out, they never are achieved—would be worth a millionth part of the price that men and women must pay for them.

'For with the paying of this price they are never finished. Do you know that men are still going blind as the result of being gassed in the last war, and that forty-one fresh cases were admitted to St. Dunstan's last year? That is the sort of fact which to my mind exhibits not only past panegyrics on the glory of war, but contemporary discourses on its grim necessity—for we are prepared to admit now that there is no fun in it, that we do it not because we like it, but because we must—as the sorry pretences that they are. Nothing that entails such suffering *can* be worth while. Yet it is the belief that it *is* worth while that makes men say that war is necessary, and the belief that it is necessary that induces them to inflict and endure the suffering it brings.'

I could not help interposing. 'Surely', I said, 'you are taking an unduly utilitarian view of the matter. No-one supposes to-day that war makes for happiness. Everybody knows that it produces pain and suffering. But happiness is not the only thing in the world that

counts; there is also virtue. And when people go to war, they do so not, as you appear to think, because they are brutes or devils, who are blinded by their passions, but because they are influenced by ideals for which they are prepared to sacrifice their immediate happiness. At present, for instance, we in this country are fighting to free the world from the continual threat of German aggression. People have come to think that as long as the Nazis are in power in Germany there can never again be assured peace in the world, and they are prepared to sacrifice their own comfort in order to establish the conditions in which alone peace is possible.'

'In other words,' said D, 'they are prepared to go to war to assure peace. Will men learn nothing from the past?'

'I am not concerned,' I answered, 'at least I am not concerned at the moment, with the question whether fighting is or is not the right way to ensure peace; in fact I am not concerned at all with the *results* of people's actions but with their *motives*, and I am trying to persuade you that some at least of men's motives in going to war are praiseworthy. I would like to remind you of a saying of Norman Angell's: "The tragedy of war is not that it is fought by bad men knowing themselves to be wrong, but by good men passionately convinced that they are right." '

'No doubt,' said D. 'But how woefully they are mistaken. The belief that war promotes virtue is as fantastically wide of the mark as the belief that it brings happiness. War provides an outlet for every evil element in man's nature. It is not merely that cruelty and ferocity, the deliberate infliction of pain, the wanton delight in destruction, human traits which every creed

and code have condemned, are erected by war into honourable duties. There is scarcely a crime in the moral calendar, from cruelty to vulgarity, from lust to corruption, to which war does not give a licence, upon which it does not place a premium. War enfranchises cupidity and greed, gives a charter to petty tyranny, makes predatoriness a virtue, and places in positions of power the vulgar and the base.

'Those whose only passport to popular favour lies in the strength of their lungs, the blatancy of their self-advertisement, or the arrogance of their demeanour, win the attention of the nation, and, staking out a claim upon the public ear, close it to the counsels of reason and justice.

'A visit to the grill room of a West End hotel during the last war would have opened the eyes of those who maintain that war has a moral, a cleansing, or a purifying effect upon a nation, that, in a word, it increases public virtue. There were visible for all to see the men to whom the war had brought power, prominence, and wealth. Profiteers rank and lush, and uniformed jacks in office guzzled and swilled and chattered of the profits the war had brought them. "If this war goes on much longer", I remember hearing one of them say, "I shall be able to retire." The daughters of the aristocratic poor paraded their attractions before the fishy eyes of the newly enriched. . . .

'Nor was it only to the greedy and the vulgar that war gave a charter for the indulgence of their appetites; mere silliness had the time of its life. The idle and frivolous, supported and encouraged by the sense of public duty born of hospital visiting, flag-selling, entertainment organizing and unstinted patronage of the

bereaved and the wounded, indulged in an orgy of pleasurable excitement. Young women "gave" themselves as a public duty to those who were fighting to preserve their virtue, and to many who were not, and the London stage was visited by a series of farces whose unashamed pornography made it impossible to doubt the "liberating" effects of the war on public morals.

'Nor was London in any way exceptional. Read Bruce Lockhart and Negley Farson on the war-time life of other capitals. Read Douglas Reed's *Insanity Fair*, which I happen to be reading at the moment. Listen, for example to this—he is writing of Russia: "In Moscow and St. Petersburg profiteers and swindlers and trollops and all the other poisonous scum that comes to the top in wartime wallowed in champagne and furs, while Russian soldiers were being driven on to the barbed-wire without decent boots." Douglas Reed adds by way of comment that the equanimity with which many people of large possessions regard war seems to be due to the fact that it has never yet spread to the Riviera.

'As a result of the last war the level of public morality has been lower in all belligerent countries than before men went to war to sustain virtue. Crimes of violence have been more common, there is less respect for human life, greater delight in cruelty, and, according to the judges, more lying and less trustworthiness.

'When bodies suffer and morals are depraved, it is not to be expected that minds should remain unaffected. In fact they are everywhere degraded. In wartime no lie is too foolish to be believed, no atrocity too unspeakable to be laid to the charge of the enemy. To sustain the lust for killing which fails and falters in

decent men, factories are established for the manufacture of hate. To maintain the fires which hate had lit, there poured forth from pulpit and Press during the four and a quarter years of the last war, a perpetual stream of hypocrisy and cant, the old assuring the young of their nobility in letting themselves be murdered to protect the old, and professing their regret that their age prevented them from joining in the gladsome sacrifices of their juniors.

'And when in high places ostentation flourishes, greed is rampant, and vulgarity enthroned, when public life is pervaded by nepotism and corruption, it is not to be wondered at if the people themselves succumb to the infection. In the last war masses of mankind were reduced to a condition which was indistinguishable from savagery, while among those who were subjected only to war's indirect effects, credulity, intolerance, uncharitableness, bitterness, anger, and every kind of childish superstition, from the grosser forms of spiritualism to palmistry, astrology and the belief in the second coming and the imminent end of the world, grew and flourished. In very truth war enthrones the mob.

'This war has only been in progress a few months, yet already the familiar phenomena are beginning to appear, the wangling and the graft and the corruption and the grab, the insolence of young jacks in office, the public lying, which, taking advantage of the facilities which wireless has made available, has turned the ether into a new medium for the transmission of human vice. And finally, when the varied vices which war evokes have come out of their lurking places in human nature and had the time of their lives—finally,

I suppose, we shall make peace, a peace which, being the child of the war, reflecting the passions which it has aroused and inspired by the motive for vengeance which it has generated, will outdo Versailles. The war is yet but a few months old and to all intents and purposes there has been no killing; in England there has been no killing at all, yet already the temperature is rising, already people are mewing for blood—did you notice, for example, that 52 per cent of the public answered "Yes" to the British Institute of Public Opinion's recently asked question: "Would you like to see the R.A.F. bombing military objectives, even if it means that the Germans would bomb back?"—already Mr. Winston Churchill has recreated the word "Huns", and with his broadcast talk of "the frenzies of a cornered maniac" vies with the Nazis to reproduce the worst features of the propaganda which he professes to deplore. I wonder what sort of peace it will be if Churchill has the making of it?

'I hope I have now made it plain why I would accept Hitler's offers to negotiate and try to make peace now. A complete victory for either side will mean a dictated peace, leaving a legacy of resentment to bedevil Europe until it breaks out in another war. A drawn battle resulting in a negotiated settlement between equals at least gives the world a chance to recover when the war is over. It also shows that you cannot impose your will on other people by force. Now this is precisely one of the things which we are said to be fighting to demonstrate. Listen, for example, to Mr. Chamberlain announcing as one of his reasons for refusing Hitler's offer to negotiate, that "it would be impossible for Great Britain to accept any such basis without forfeiting her

honour and abandoning her claim that international disputes should be settled by discussion and not by force." Our claim is, you see, that international disputes are not to be settled by force, and this claim we propose to make good by settling an international dispute by force. We are fighting to show that you cannot, or at least must not, impose your will upon other people by violence, and we are proposing to go on fighting until we have achieved victory and have the Germans at our mercy; until in fact, we have shown that you can. If we were really sincere in holding that disputes should be settled by discussion and not by force, then we ought not to rely upon force to settle them, which means that we should embrace the opportunity of negotiating a peace following upon an indecisive war. For an indecisive war would prove precisely what we want proved, namely, that the method of force is not the method to adopt when you want to settle a dispute, *simply because it does not in fact produce a settlement.* Put it like this: if one hates war as I do, one wants war to be a failure, not a failure for this side or that, because it is beaten, but a failure for both sides, because neither side reaps any benefit; a failure, that is to say, *for war as such.* Now the failure of war to do what is expected of it, *the failure of war as war,* will be the first step towards the abandonment of war. That is why, apart altogether from my own personal loathing of war and without invoking any general principles in my support, I maintain that the only thing to do, once a war starts, is to get it stopped as soon as possible. Consequently I should negotiate with Hitler. What is more, while the negotiations are in progress, I should make a truce, a truce, which, if the negotiations showed signs

of success, might be prolonged into a peace. If, of course, they break down, then the killing can begin again; but a few lives will have been saved, and no harm that I can see done to anyone if, while we consider the terms of a possible peace, we are not bending all our energies to destroy those who offer it. The great thing, as I see it, is to get the statesmen round a table and to set them talking.

'There are, of course, two major lions in the path. First, the British pledge to Poland; secondly, our advertised determination not to treat with Hitlerism. As regards the first, it is extremely difficult to see how we can now help Poland. Since Russia has also violated Poland's integrity, a full redemption of our pledge would presumably involve us in a war not only with Germany, but also with Russia. Hence I interpret the fact that we have very wisely not declared war on Russia as a tacit avowal of our recognition that the pledge is not now fully redeemable. The sensible thing to do is, surely, to recognize that the entry of Russia upon the stage has altered the situation beyond all possibility of estimation—there are already those who regard it as an event comparable in importance with the French and Russian revolutions, as in fact a turning point in history—and has rendered a *complete* return to the *status quo ante* out of the question. If we do not want to be faced with a solid Russo-German bloc, whether hybrid National-Socialist-Communist or Communist through and through consequent upon a Left revolution in Germany, we shall be well advised to refrain from standing upon the strict letter of impossible commitments and, with one reservation which I shall return to in a moment, to accept in Poland the *fait accompli*.

'The second lion is a beast mainly composed of words. We have said that we will not make terms with Hitlerism, not, to the best of my knowledge, with Hitler. On the contrary, we have several times affirmed that the internal affairs of other nations are their concern, not ours, and publicly recognized that it is not our business to interfere in them. We have affirmed, in other words, that it is not our business to depose Hitler. If, in accordance with our declared intention, we are to leave Hitler alone, what of Hitlerism? Hitlerism, as opposed to Hitler, is, presumably, a state of mind which expresses itself in a policy of persistent aggression exemplified by the absorption of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Memel, and now Poland. If Hitler will renounce this policy, then, presumably, we are at liberty to treat with him. But will he, and even if he does, can we trust him to keep his word? This question most people would answer with a violent negative. Very well, then, there must be guarantees. But what guarantees can there be? I can think of only two. The first, for us to maintain an overwhelming force and to be at all times prepared to use it to make Hitler behave; the second, for us *all* to embark upon a substantial measure of disarmament. The first method is, I suggest, implicitly repudiated by the very fact that we are trying to make peace instead of to continue war. It is, of course, just possible that Hitler may have come to the conclusion that England and France are too strong to be beaten, and will behave himself simply because he does not want to face the prospect of an endless war which he cannot win. In this case the overwhelming force guarantee might suffice to preserve peace; but a peace based on fear would be highly pre-

carious and in fact little different from the twelve months that separated September 1938 from September 1939.

'I suggest, then, that a substantial measure of disarmament, carried out under the supervision of neutral observers, is the guarantee to be aimed at. Given disarmament, the outlines of a possible peace begin to shape themselves. They take the form of a new deal for Europe under the auspices of Germany, Russia, England, and France, with the co-operation of the neutrals, particularly Italy and the U.S.A. The constructive proposals of such a peace have been discussed often enough and are, I imagine, familiar to all of us. They include on the economic side the abolition of customs and tariff barriers, the withdrawal of quotas and favoured nation clauses, and the adoption of measures to raise the standard of living of all peoples throughout Europe. To such measures we ourselves should have to make specific and far-reaching contributions. They would include the abrogation of the Ottawa agreements, the opening up of the British Empire as a free trading area to all comers, and the transfer of colonies and undeveloped territories to the administration of an international commission upon which all the nations who were parties to the settlement would be represented. But the settlement should, I think, include from the first a hint of the possibility of a more ultimate solution. More and more of us are coming to realize that it is only by superseding some at least of the powers of sovereign nation States and vesting them in a common government that we can lay the foundation of a durable peace. There can, people are beginning to see, be no guarantee of peace so long

as each nation remains absolute arbiter of its destiny and judge and jury in its own cause. I agree with them. A federal solution is no doubt a long shot, but it has three incidental advantages: (1) if the Nazis refused our offer to participate in a federal government for Europe, their refusal would introduce a rift between the Nazi government and the German people; (2) it offers the Germans an alternative to the Communism which so many fear as the inevitable consequence of the fall of the Nazis; and (3) by mere virtue of the fact that it abolishes the independence of *all* the sovereign States who come into the Union, it provides a solution, the only possible solution, to the problems presented by Poland and Czechoslovakia. Poles and Czechs who elected members to the parliament of a federal government would, one might hope, no longer feel the same temptation to insist on the restoration of Poland and Czechoslovakia as independent sovereign States.

'It is, of course, difficult to lay down terms for our acceptance of an offer before it is made; and I am conscious of the vagueness of the sort of proposals I have outlined. I am also prepared to be told that, vague as they are, my terms are either (*a*) grossly dishonourable, or (*b*) hopelessly impracticable. The answer to (*a*) and (*b*) lies less in the terms themselves than in the question "What is the alternative?" If we continue to fight, the consequences are incalculable, if only because it will become impossible to set bounds to the extension of the conflict. There are, however, only two possible conclusions. The first, a victory for one side; the second, a drawn battle and peace through exhaustion. The former would mean, as I have already hinted, another

Versailles; the latter would mean a devastated Europe from which the only country to benefit would be Russia. But if we are to have a draw, why not have it now before we are all of us bled white, with Russia to enjoy the pickings of our bones?'

D's case, strong as it was, seemed to me to be vitiated by one serious flaw. 'You forget', I said, 'one thing; that we cannot trust Hitler. As long as he is in power, we simply cannot make peace, if only because of our knowledge that he will break the peace as soon as he sees a chance of breaking it to his own advantage. Then we shall have the job to do all over again. Why not finish it now?'

'Well,' he answered. 'Suppose you are right. Suppose that, peace having been made, Hitler breaks it, and we have then to go to war again. What have we lost? As I have already said, if the worst comes to the worst, we can always begin the killing again; but meanwhile we shall have had a respite, a respite which, since peace has its momentum no less than war, might conceivably prolong itself into a real peace. Even if it is only for a few months or even weeks that the killing stops, it will have been a few months or weeks to the good. You forget my first premiss: anything is better than war, and a day of peace, even if it *is* only a day, is a day gained. Come, rid your mind of prejudice and prepossession; clear it of cant, abjure convention, lay aside the mask, shoo the bats from the belfry, clear the sand from the gear-case, break the bubbles in the think-tank, and admit with me that a day on which human beings are not devoting all their energies to the task of murdering one another is better than a day on which they are.'

I smiled at his vehemence. 'I suppose', I said, 'that my inability to accept your conclusion arises from my difficulty in sharing your view of war as merely a species of mass murder.'

'But what, pray, is the difference, except that in the case of war you murder people with whom you have no personal quarrel and your murdering is legitimized by the State? Do you think that it hurts a man any less to have his bowels ripped open or his eyes put out because the operation is performed by a soldier acting under public orders, and not by a thug pursuing a private vendetta? Does a woman grieve any less because it is an enemy bullet that kills her lover, and not a shot from a jilted mistress? What puzzles me is that intelligent men like yourself cannot see these things. They are as plain as a pikestaff to me; why not, then, to you? I come here to the thing that puzzles me most about this whole business. In what way am I peculiar that I should be a pacifist, when most of my friends are not? I am intelligent, but I am not more intelligent than you; at least, not much. Now am I?'

I agreed cordially that he was not.

'Am I more virtuous than the average?'

I hastened to repudiate any such suggestion. D seemed to me to be a perfectly ordinary, fallible, sensual, middle-class, middle-aged chap, kindly when he was not crossed, considerate when he had nothing to lose by considerateness, and tolerant, because so long as they did not interfere with his pleasures, he did not much mind what other people did. All this and much more I told him with emphasis. He appeared relieved.

'Quite so,' he said, 'that is me exactly. You are quite right. I am not especially honest, unselfish, kindly,

humane, or meek; I am not in the least bit saint-like; in fact, if anything I am slightly on the sinner side of the average norm. How, then, is it that, being only a little more intelligent than most, I nevertheless see so clearly what most overlook; that, being distinctly less virtuous than most, I am convinced of the utter wickedness of that which most are prepared to tolerate? I simply cannot understand it. I never could understand it. The oddness of it all struck me particularly in the course of a recent visit to Karel Capek's play *The Mother*. You haven't seen it?'

'No, I haven't. What is it about?'

'The central character is a woman, the mother, who has lost her husband, an army major, in a punitive expedition against recalcitrant natives. She has five sons. The eldest dies from yellow fever in the tropics, where he has established himself at the risk of his life to carry out research into methods of coping with the germ-carrying proclivities of the mosquito; as I remember the play, he actually permits himself to be bitten, as an experiment, by a mosquito which has already bitten an infected person, and, as his mother puts it, gives his life to save the natives whom his father gave *his* life to destroy. The second son is killed just as the play begins, while engaged in an attempt to break the altitude record for an aeroplane carrying a load of bombs. His experiments in high-altitude flying will, he explains, be of great military value to the army, if war comes. The third and fourth sons are twins and espouse different sides in a civil war which breaks out between the Reds, demanding equality and emancipation for the workers, and the Whites, who are for law and order and assume the role of patriotic protectors

of their country, preservers of its historic traditions, constitution, integrity, sacred rights, and so on. . . . Throughout the play the ghosts of these dead gather in the father's room and hold converse with the mother. They tell her how they died "for duty", "for their country", "for the cause", "for right and justice". She objects to the sacrifice of her children on the altar of abstract ideas. They explain to her that they "had to do it", that "all the other fellows were doing it and that they could not stand aside", that "they were only doing their duty", and so on. Each assures her separately in respect of each one of the conflicts and catastrophes that has brought about his death, that she "doesn't understand".

The fifth and youngest son is different. A weakling despised by his brothers as a milksop, he hates violence and writes poetry. He has always been under his mother's special care, so much so that they accuse her of coddling him. She herself admits that she has "brought him up to be different".

In the last act the country is invaded. From the wireless there pours a stream of denunciation of the enemy. They have "broken their pledges", "behaved with unequalled perfidy", "trampled on historic rights", "violated territory", "beaten up civilians". A woman announcer's voice breaks, as she relays a message describing the torpedoing of a troopship and the death of all on board. Her son, she explains, was on the troopship. We hear of a bomb dropping on a school and killing over a hundred children. "We must fight", says the voice of the announcer, "for truth, for honour and our rights. The army stands firm. Never will we yield an inch of our sacred soil to the invaders."

'But the army requires reinforcements, and the broadcast ends with an urgent call to arms. All are summoned to the colours to defend their country. Burning with indignation, aflame with patriotism the youngest boy claims his right to join up. The mother denies it. She has already, she says, lost a husband and four sons because of men's willingness to be imposed upon by those who would persuade them that it is their duty to slay and to be slain by other men in defence of precisely those ideals which their victims and killers believe themselves to be serving. She has brought this son up to be different and will not let him go. A family council of the dead gather and reason with her; she appeals to them to leave her her one remaining son, but appeals in vain. "Mother," says the boy, "you don't understand," and with a gesture of despair the mother gives way and lets him go.

'I found all this extraordinarily moving; so, as far as I could judge, did the rest of the audience. Yet it was a sparse audience. This play, dealing nobly with the supreme and distinctive tragedy of our times was playing to an empty house, while just across Shaftesbury Avenue the latest leg and teeth show was drawing crowded audiences. From the first, I found myself in wholehearted agreement with the mother. As I have already explained, the ends which wars are fought to secure, power and glory and prestige and interests and sacred rights and historic missions, have always seemed to me to be mere figments not worth a single man's blood or a single woman's tears. Liberty and democracy might, I agree, be ends worth fighting for, but liberty and democracy do not, in general, seem to have been preserved by fighting. Wars occur, I suppose,

because, in the last resort, of the evil in human nature, because, to put it in more modern terms, of the sadistic and aggressive impulses in man, the pretexts of war, democracy, independence, liberty, justice and the rest, being *ad hoc* rationalizations by which men seek to give a semblance of justification to actions dictated by hatred or provoked by fear. Holding these beliefs, I find myself totally unable to accept the values which wars implicitly assume. When men speak of valour, I can discern only efficiency in slaughter; when they prate of heroism, I can see only a willingness to risk one's own life that one may the more effectively deprive other human beings of life; when they appeal to the country's danger, to loyalty to comrades, to the honour of the regiment and so on, they seem to me to be merely setting traps to catch and exploit men's noblest emotions in the service of ignoble ends. For the slaughter of other human beings must, I insist, rank as an ignoble end.

'Believing all this, I sympathized intensely with the mother. She seemed to me wholly to comprehend the tragic predicament of our civilization, to which most males are blissfully indifferent. What is that predicament? We live in a world in which all the traditional enemies of man's welfare have been vanquished by science. Fire and flood, drought and pestilence and famine, are all more or less effectively under control. We ought, then, one would have thought, to be happy and prosperous. Yet most of us remain poor and frightened. Why is this? There are many answers, but one of them is, I suggest, because of our willingness to kill and to be killed for the sake of those abstract symbols which deprived the mother of her husband and her sons.

Instead of preserving and promoting life, we bend all our energies to perfecting the instruments of death; instead of enjoying ourselves, we sweat and strain on route marches and in barrack yards; instead of striving to be individuals, we endeavour to emulate the uniformity of termites and the regularity of machines that we may become more efficient than our neighbours in the arts of mass murder. Now this behaviour seems to me to be as silly as it is wicked; if it isn't silly and wicked, I should like to know what is. I am not, as I have already said, a man of strong moral principle. For many years I have contrived to get along with as few morals as a man can possess and still preserve some title to civilized humanity. So far as concerned myself, there was, during these years, practically nothing that I wanted to do that I thought I ought not to do; while, so far as concerned other people, I didn't much mind what they did so long as they did not injure or annoy me. My angle on life, if I may so put it, was in no sense a moral, though in a very distinctive sense an intellectual one; it was to the bar of reason and not of principle that I called conduct for judgement.

'In middle age, I must confess, I have acquired some morals and find life less simple than I did. But that is another story.

'I mention all this only to support my contention that I am not a person over-given to righteous indignation or to strong moral feeling. I am not one of those who go about the world approving and disapproving of things, nor have I regarded life as an opportunity for airing my moral prejudices. Nevertheless, with regard to this question of war, I have never for a moment doubted that the slaughter of one's fellow men by

order of the Government was morally wicked as well as intellectually stupid, and that, judged by utilitarian standards, the sentiment of patriotism in the name of which men undertake it has become the most dangerous form of self-indulgence into which we can be betrayed.

'When I say that war is morally wicked, I am pronouncing what I take to be an ultimate judgement, and I don't know how further to analyse it. I know war to be wicked just as I know it to be wicked to torture a kitten or betray a friend. When I say that war is intellectually stupid, I mean—I should like, if you don't mind, to reiterate my meaning—(*a*) that it doesn't achieve any of the results that it proposes to achieve; (*b*) that history shows that it doesn't, and has shown this not once but many times; and (*c*) that, even if it did, the value of the results would be totally disproportionate to the amount of suffering and evil involved in their achievement.

'Of all this, I say, I am utterly and completely convinced and, being convinced, felt myself instinctively sympathizing with the mother's view of her husband and sons as a lot of naughty boys, quarrelling and destroying and making mischief and hurting themselves and one another through sheer wantonness. I am, of course deliberately putting it as I imagine it would be put by a woman to whom men may and, indeed, often do appear incorrigibly contrary and stupid—they ought all, she seems to imply, to be spanked and sent to bed, with their medals and cocked hats, their debts of honour, their points of prestige, their creeds and causes and crusades; but to her the men are never positively wicked.

'But Shaw has said all this much better than I can hope to do. Have you a copy of *The Devil's Disciple* here?' I went to the bookcase and took the volume down and gave it to D. D rapidly turned the pages. 'Ah, here it is,' he said. 'Dick Dudgeon is discussing with Mrs. Anderson the ethics of dying for a cause. Listen to this. The English soldiers, he is telling her, are trying "to cow us by making an example of somebody on that gallows to-day. Well, let us cow them by saying that we can stand by one another to the death. That is the only force that can send Burgoyne back across the Atlantic and make America a nation."

' "*Judith* (impatiently): Oh, what does all that matter?

' "*Richard* (laughing): True; what does it matter? What does anything matter? You see, men have these strange notions, Mrs. Anderson; and women see the folly of them.

' "*Judith*: Woman have to lose those they love through them.

' "*Richard:* They can easily get fresh lovers."

'You see how Mrs. Anderson pricks the whole bubble with her question: "What does all that matter?" and Dudgeon, being of course a Shaw character, has the sense to agree. But you see also what I mean when I say that women don't think that war is wrong in the sense of being morally wicked. (Is anything, I wonder, ever actually wicked to a woman? Have women any morals? Have they any native sense of sin? Seeing them together, hearing them talk amongst themselves, one often doubts it. One sometimes wonders whether morals were not invented by men in order that they might justify their own mischievousness to women.)

Women, I suspect, have always found men's interminable discussions about the ethics of heroism and honour a tiresome bore. For women think not of principles, but of practice; not of mankind, but of particular men: "How is my son faring?" they ask. "Is my husband hurt?" "Will my lover come back?"—whereas I, being a man, tend rather to dwell on the suffering and evil wrought by war as a whole, which I regard not as a tiresome irrelevance to the serious business of living, but as a thing positively wicked, the expression of the aggressive and sadistic impulses which are innate in man; or, to put it traditionally and, I think, more correctly, as the expression of man's innate sinfulness.

'In spite, however, of this difference of standpoint and emphasis due to our difference of sex, our conclusions, the mother's and mine, are broadly identical.

'I am not saying that war is ineradicable; it can, of course, be cured, as can any other vice, but it is the supreme vice of our time, and the need to overcome it, the supreme problem of our age. And here I come once more to my puzzle. I am not, I repeat, better than most men; on the contrary, I am often hasty in action and mistaken in judgement. I get things out of proportion. I apply false scales of values. I am fussy and self-important, and swept by uncontrollable gusts of irritation. Above all, I continually allow my desires to deflect my reason and to arrive at conclusions which have no pretensions to truth save such as are afforded by my own wish to think them true. If we were all to sit for an examination in which marks were given for moral qualities only, I should, I am afraid, put up a bad show. When my marks sheet was totted up, it would appear that not only am I not more virtuous

than most of my fellows, but that I am less so. I do not live a very good life, and until very lately I did not even try to live a good life, or think about the sort of life I was living, one way or the other. I am selfish and egotistical; I am touchy; I am liable to sulk when I think I have a grievance, and I take pleasure in making the most of my grievance. I am unkind and often disagreeable; I am unstable in affection and sometimes untrustworthy in conduct. Above all, I am apt to treat human beings as tools to be used and exploited for my own convenience. I am boastful, conceited, and on occasion cowardly and cruel. It is not a pleasant picture, and I have deliberately left out all contrasting lights and concentrated on its shades. But the sum of the matter is that nobody who knew me would feel disposed to exclaim: "Here is a nice, good-tempered, unassuming, unaggressive sort of chap, whose general behaviour is reasonably Christ-like and whose breast flows with the milk of human kindness!" On the contrary, he would be much more inclined to say: "Here is a typical, full-blooded specimen of the ordinary sensual Englishman! He shoots and fishes, he gets excited on horseback and beats his horse unmercifully. He has inflicted corporal punishment on his children. He smokes, drinks, swears, plays games. Not only does he fall short of the standard of the good Christian who tries to live as Christ enjoined; he does not even come up to the level of the ordinary man in the street, who does not bother his head about codes and creeds but lives by the light of his natural kindliness."

'Granted that this is the picture of myself which most people would be inclined to draw, how is it, I

want to know, that these things which are so plain to me are not plain to men who are wiser than I; that what I see and know to be wicked seems not to be wicked to men who are much better than I? When war comes, I see, to my astonished regret, those whose wisdom in other matters I know to be superior to mine falling once more victims to all the old follies and deceptions, believing that *this* war is necessary, that *this* war will be different, that *this* war must be fought to a bitter end, that of *this* war good will come; persuading themselves that we must once again fight to preserve peace, lose our liberties in order to protect our freedom, and show our disapproval of the methods of the dictators by threatening to burn and shatter and poison and dismember hundreds of thousands of their wretched victims.

'I would not feel the confidence that I do in my convictions if they were not the highest common factor of the teaching of the wisest and best men of every age. Christ and Buddha and Lao Tse and St. Francis, and in our own day Gandhi, have all known that the way to defeat violence was not by greater violence but by the opposite of violence, that is, by love. The word "love" brings up once again the moral question. I am neither a loving man nor a particularly lovable one. Though I recognize the truth of Christ's teaching, I make little attempt to live up to it and such poor attempts as I do make are lamentably unsuccessful. I am as full of cruel and angry thoughts as most, perhaps fuller. I try to dominate others and bend them to my will, and when they thwart me, I try to hurt them. Yet I know that these thoughts that I harbour and these actions that I do are wrong, and I know too

that if these things are wrong for me, wars, which fill whole communities with cruel and angry thoughts and the desire to dominate and hurt millions of people whom they have never seen, are wrong for communities. And again, the greatest teachers of mankind agree with me. How is it, then, that those who I know to be better than I, who are kind, charitable and compassionate and spread happiness around them, do not see these things that I see, but when war comes, cheerfully surrender themselves to the pleasures of hating and hurting with the best. The question is one that troubles me continuously, and I don't profess to know the answer.'

I had been so interested by D's self-communings—he had been talking, it was obvious, to himself rather than to me—that I had let him ramble on, forgetful of my quest. But, I reminded myself, this conversation, like the others, had been undertaken with a purpose. How far did D conform to, how far gainsay, the Swift-Shaw-Fielding view of human nature? I returned to the charge with the questions:

'Granted that the war ought not to have been fought, yet, much as one may deplore the fact, it *is* being fought. And given that it *is* being fought, surely one ought to turn it to what good uses one can. Now to what good use do *you* think that it might be turned? You must, I suppose, have reflected on the matter, and you will, I hope, have come to the conclusion that, bad as it is, it yet need not be wholly bad. What, then, of good do you hope to get out of it?'

'I have already answered that,' he said. 'No good at all, unless we are content to stop at a drawn battle and make a patched-up peace.'

'Then ought you not', I asked him, 'to try and stop a war which you believe to be mistaken in conception and disastrous in result?'

'My dear chap, don't be such a simpleton. How could I stop it? What would you have me do? Demonstrate, address meetings, distribute pacifist leaflets to the troops, embroil myself with the authorities, get myself arrested and possibly imprisoned, testify and become a martyr? Not likely! I had quite enough of that sort of thing in the last war. Besides, to quote *The Devil's Disciple* to you again, "Martyrdom is the only way in which a man can become famous without ability" and I, thank God, have ability.'

'Then don't you think that a man ought to stand up for his opinions, if he believes them to be true? Ought not his practice at least,' I added, thinking of D's comfortable job, 'to be consistent with his professions, even at the cost of inconvenience, possibly of hardship to himself? Is he justified in behaving like everybody else, and so by implication acquiescing in the continuance of the war he condemns?'

'Now why', D asked, 'do you ask that? What conceivable advantage would there be to me or to anybody else in my making what is called "a stand"? What possible good would it do? Would it affect by one iota the course of events? It would not. Would it shorten by one moment the duration of the war? It would not. What, then, would it do? Lose me my job, cause me to be badgered and bullied by every thick-headed patriot who crossed my path, earn me the contempt of some of my friends and the enmity of others, and very probably consign me to prison to rot in idleness and impotence until the war was over. Now what

on earth would be the good of all that? It would break my spirit, make me miserable, and I cannot see that it would bring a ha'p'orth of benefit to anybody.

'No, I can recognize only one duty for myself in wartime, and that is at all costs to survive with health, spirits, and sanity unimpaired.'

I censured this attitude as being in the highest degree egotistical; in fact, I said that I was not at all sure that egotistical was not too polite a name for it. And being by now thoroughly irritated, I must, I suppose, have been heard to mutter such words as 'selfish', 'cowardly', under my breath.

'Yes, of course,' said D, 'my attitude is selfish. But it isn't only selfish. There are, I think, broadly two sorts of motives that underlie it. The first sort are, if you like to call them so, purely selfish. When the State goes to war, it outlaws itself morally. Not approving of killing to gain my own ends, I cannot treat as a moral entity any person or group of persons which, in order to gain *its* ends, first of all devotes all its energies to killing and then gives itself moral marks for doing so. Such a person or group of persons is, for me, *pro tem* outside the moral pale. I am, therefore, I conceive, under no obligation to treat a society which so acts with the consideration which I recognize as owing to a moral entity. One can no more deal morally with a mad dog State, that is, with a State that is at war, than one can deal morally with a mad dog. And so I have not the slightest compunction in concluding with such a State any bargain that suits me personally. I shall lie to it, if lies will serve my turn, profess to be a patriot, if a show of patriotism is necessary for the retention of my job, and give such service in the prose-

cution of the war as may be demanded of me. In a word, I will do anything and everything that may be necessary to comply with my overriding principle of survival, with health, spirits, and sanity unimpaired.

'And why not, pray? Because the State goes mad, why should I let its madness infect me? Because it acts like a fool, why should I not behave like a wise man? And if behaving like a wise man entails aping its antics, echoing its enthusiasms, and appearing to endorse its folly, then I will ape, echo, and endorse with the best of them; otherwise things might be made uncomfortable for me. After all, it is a well understood thing that one humours lunatics. . . .

'In a nutshell, then, my selfish reasons amount to saying that I do not see—I never did—why I should allow myself to be made more uncomfortable than I can help by the follies of my contemporaries, follies which I deplore, and which, mind you, I did my best to prevent.

'But these are not my only reasons. I am also—it may surprise you to learn it—actuated by unselfish motives. It is difficult to speak about one's own nobility without offensiveness, difficult even to confess to the possession of creditable motives without complacency. It is, one feels, the sort of thing that someone else can do for one so much better than one can do it for oneself. I shall try to summarize mine as inoffensively as I can, but I am afraid that, before I am done, you will be hating me for complacency as much as you are already despising me for selfishness.

'I start from the premiss that war is wrong and that in a pacifism which refuses in all circumstances to make war is to be found, therefore, the only right policy. Therefore, I must desire that there shall be as

many pacifists, that is to say, as many persons holding sensible views in regard to war, as possible. Obviously, if there were enough of them, there would be no war. It follows that I further desire that they should be as influential as possible. Now they will not exert influence in a prison cell, or in an internment camp. Therefore, they should avoid arrest and keep out of prison. They will not exert influence, or not much, if they are immersed in non-combatant duties in some branch of the army. Have you ever heard of a soldier exerting any influence on anybody? "Their's but to do and die" and all that. . . . It follows that pacifists must keep out of the R.A.M.C. and all other bodies engaged in non-combatant work, which are parts of the military machine. Again, they will not exert influence if they make a habit of offensively obtruding extreme opinions and obtaining for themselves the reputation of being bigoted fanatics. The more popular they are, the better; and so the less parade they make of their pacifism, the better. How often have I heard a man's advocacy of some perfectly righteous cause discounted on the ground that everybody knows *his* opinion already? How often have I been told that anybody rather than myself should write the article pleading for fair treatment for conscientious objectors, or sign the letter protesting against the refusal to negotiate with Hitler, on the grounds that I am a pacifist, that everybody knows I am a pacifist, and that everybody, therefore, will discount my advocacy and dismiss my protests. It is, then, by bitter experience that I have come to realize the need for pacifists to keep quiet about their opinions, except on the very rare occasions when by expressing them they can feel sure of

producing the effect desired. What is important is that pacifists should retain and increase their influence, and from this it follows that they should avoid persecution. A thwarted man becomes bigoted, a frustrated man angry, a persecuted man bitter, and the influence of those who are bigoted, angry or bitter is either negligible or bad, so bad that, looking back upon the melancholy history of martyrs, one is almost justified in concluding that the one thing you must not do if you want to advance a cause, is to permit yourself to suffer for it. It is not only, then, for their own sakes that I would bid pacifists be careful not to suffer for their opinions. I conclude that it is the duty of a pacifist to survive with as little discomfort of body and distress of mind as he can contrive, and to make whatever terms with the Government may be necessary for the realization of his purpose. Granted that he succeeds, granted that he survives intact and able to exert such influence as his talents and possessions permit him to command, how should he use it?

'First, to take advantage of every move for peace that comes from the other side and to try to influence people's minds in the direction of its acceptance. We must not reject all the so-called "peace offensives" of the enemy as we rejected the last one. Secondly, to take advantage of such war weariness as may develop among our own people, to try to increase it, and to use it as a means of bringing the war to an end. Already people are, to use their own expression, "fed up" with the war. Once that feeling of "fed-upness" grows strong enough and spreads far enough, the Government may feel constrained to negotiate a peace.

'Thirdly—and most important of all—we must con-

trive to avoid another Versailles, which means that the next time nations are engaged in what they call "peace-making", we must be there to take a hand in the job. "There is a tide in the affairs of men . . ." and so on, and the next time it comes our way we must be on the alert to see that it is not missed. If we can't get something better out of the misery and suffering of this war than the League of Nations that we got out of the last, then I for one should despair of humanity. I am quite prepared to believe that we shan't. But at least the effort is worth making, and in order that we may make it with effect, as many of us as possible must be available with reputations intact and influence unimpaired, able to win the ears of our fellow countrymen, to persuade their minds, and to determine their judgements. In a word, then, there must be as many people as possible at the end of the war who know what the terms of a decent peace should be, and are prepared to co-operate with the Germans to ensure that we get it. Now granted that these ends are desirable, granted that we should do what we can to achieve them, it follows that we must first survive.'

COMMENT

D left me exasperated and unsatisfied. I had no good answer to his arguments and I did not doubt his sincerity, but I could not avoid the feeling that his pacifism was the conclusion of a process of theorizing rather than the expression of a passionately held conviction; that it was a series of syllogisms rather than a call to high endeavour, a rationalization of selfishness, possibly even of cowardice, rather than the disinterested service of an ideal. D's pacifism was not of the

kind that is ready to sacrifice all for a noble cause, but of the kind that is willing to compromise on any terms for the sake of comfort and convenience. When all the world goes mad, D had said, I see no reason why I should not behave like a sane man. D saw no reason, but I rather thought that I did. Or perhaps it was my feeling rather than my reason that was outraged. I felt that a man who could remain so completely aloof from the travail of the society to which he belonged, even if one were to grant that the travail was the result of a mistaken policy, who could prove so successfully that his convenience went hand in hand with his duty and could harness his wits so effectively to the service of his comfort, was not wholly admirable.

Ninety per cent, I thought, for intelligence, seventy-five per cent for sincerity, but virtue——? How many for virtue? I found D's virtue impossible to mark. For one thing, he had himself laid no claim to it. For another, I could not help but realize that if only there were more men like D in the world, mankind would be happier, happier if only because mankind would be free from war. But better? D, it was obvious, was not a very good man. Was there, then, an incompatibility between happiness and virtue, so that one could make men happier without oneself being virtuous? I was, it was obvious, hovering on the brink of ethics. To enter that difficult and dangerous territory, it would be necessary to arm oneself with nothing less than the writing of a book. I have in fact written one. It is very bulky, but I cannot say that, as a result, I find the territory any less difficult or any less dangerous. I am certainly not going to enter it now; and I therefore leave the problem of D's virtue to the mercies of my readers.

Chapter VIII

INTERLUDE IN A BUS

★

The character who is now to appear is so different from any of those who have preceded him that to introduce him without a break would involve a jolt to the reader's consciousness that I am anxious to avoid. I have ventured, therefore, to bridge the transition with an interlude. The interlude may be likened to those warning phrases, 'half closes', I think they are called, with which the great musicians (Handel and Beethoven are particularly adept in their use of the device) sometimes link together two movements in a sonata or a symphony. The half close not only makes a break; it introduces a feeling of expectancy in regard to what is to come and at the same time foreshadows its mood. It is precisely this service which I have designed the following interlude to perform.

It was ten o'clock in a blacked-out bus in the King's Cross Road. The dim blue lights gave a deathly look to the half-dozen passengers. The conductor was humming. The sound of humming was rare enough in those early days of the war, and, speaking out of my new-

found gregariousness, I said to him: 'You seem cheerful enough in spite of everything.' He answered: 'Yes, I am cheerful. Would you like to know why?' I said that I would like to know very much. He cleared his throat as one about to make an important announcement. 'Well,' he said, 'I will tell you, but you must take it in the spirit I give it to you. Will you?' 'Certainly,' I said, feeling a little taken aback. I had been expecting some Cockney witticism about the inconveniences of the war and the conductor's solemnity was disconcerting. 'Happiness', he announced, 'comes from within. Happiness has to do with thought; it is a question of controlling the mind. I can control my mind; therefore I can be happy. See? I will tell you how to do it.'

I looked expectantly towards him. The secret of mind control! That, indeed, would be something to get out of the war. 'You should first make your mind a blank. For this, you must shut yourself up inside yourself and meditate until there's nothing in your mind at all. You won't find it easy at first, and a very queer sensation it is. When you have emptied your mind, try thinking of one thing at a time. Then dismiss it and think of something else. See? When you have done this several times, you will find that you have got complete control of your thoughts and that nobody can impose his mind on yours. Nobody. And no *thing*, which means that external things can't any longer affect you. You don't want a lot of money or a big house or wardrobes full of clothes and things like that. What's more, you don't want to fight; because being happy in yourself you don't want the things other people want. If everybody had this mental control, there would be no war because all their happiness would come from within

and they wouldn't want to take things from other people. Everybody would be a law unto himself, so no one could make you do the things you don't want to do.'

'Then why', somebody asked, 'doesn't it work that way with Hitler?'

'Because he hasn't got control of his mind. If he had, he wouldn't be able to make war, for if he had once known peace of mind he would value it, and he would know that causing unhappiness to others would disturb it. He couldn't be happy if he did.'

'Look here, we must have you up on Tower Hill,' said another passenger. (They were all listening with interest.)

But the conductor went on disregardingly. 'You should try this, all of you,' he said.

'What is it, Oxford Group?' somebody asked.

This question obviously struck him as being below his level, for he said disgustedly: ' 'Course it isn't. 'Course it isn't. I will tell you what it is. No, I won't.' Evidently he felt he had said enough, but I pressed him so earnestly that his confidence came back. 'It's a cycle of life, that's what it is,' he said. 'If I were to ask you how far you were developed mentally, you would probably say, about two-thirds. But I say you are not more than one-tenth developed yet, and that the greater part of your development continues after you're dead. You don't merely come to an end when you leave this earth. You go on to complete the cycle of life and nothing can stop it. You can't expect much happiness yet because your mind is not under control. But you will have it later on, if you don't throw away all your chances by getting angry and panicky and hating the Huns like Churchill does.'

At this point I had to leave the bus and at this point the conductor, having served as my bridge, retires to introduce E.

Chapter IX

A RELIGION FOR OUR TIMES

*

E is one of the best men I know, perhaps the best. If I were to be asked what I meant by the word 'best', I doubt if I could answer, short of writing a book. I have, in fact, written a book which seeks among other things to give an answer to this question; it runs to 800 odd pages, but I doubt very much whether it succeeds, any more than it succeeds in answering the question as to the relation between virtue and happiness raised by the case of D. I will confine myself, therefore, to explaining that when I say that E is the 'best' man I know, I do not mean merely that he obeys the laws, lives with one wife, does not beat her, or steal, or get drunk, and that he abstains from all the more obvious forms of vice; I do not mean that he produces more happiness, or even that he does more good in the world than other men who are known to me, although he does in fact create happiness and do good. Indeed, my statement has no meaning that I can convey by any other word or set of words, since the quality for which the word 'best' stands is not resolvable into any other quality or set of qualities.

In this respect goodness seems to me to be like a colour; I can recognize blue when I see it, but I do not know how to describe it; nor is blueness analysable into anything whatever except blueness.

The point is important. One recognizes E's goodness just as one recognizes the beauty of a picture, the rightness of a musical phrase, the correct solution of a problem in chess or mathematics, or the loveliness of a spring morning. Confronted by these things, one's mind gives a little jump of delighted recognition. 'There it is,' it says, 'that's it!' and, having made its acknowledgements, it realizes that there is no more to be said. If somebody denied that the picture was beautiful, failed to appreciate the rightness of the musical phrase, to perceive the correctness of the solution, or to respond to the loveliness of the spring morning, one would not try to reason with him, at least one would not, if one were wise; one would conclude regretfully that he lacked a faculty of insight which had mercifully been vouchsafed to oneself. He would produce, in fact, much the same impression as a dog looking at a newspaper or a cat playing with the pieces on a chessboard. Here is something, one would say, whose significance is not being understood because the sense requisite for its comprehension is simply not there.

Similarly with E. There were people who failed to recognize the quite peculiar goodness of the man, but they were very few, and one could only regretfully conclude that in respect of their lack of perceptiveness they were not fully human. For me, a meeting with E was an important experience. I did not see how anybody could possibly be unaware of the astonishing power that radiated from his personality, which, com-

prehending and compassionate in regard to the misfortunes of others, was in regard to itself detached and serene. Yet though E's serenity was unmistakable it was not a serenity born of dullness or spiritual anæmia, the quality of a cow, but was the characteristic of vital energies held in balance, the quality of a sage. It did not obscure these vital energies; on the contrary, the vitality that radiated from E was as palpable as an emanation. E was, if I may so put it, so intensely *there* that many found his presence disconcerting. He made by not doing or saying anything an impression greater than is produced by others' words and actions.

In appearance E was tall and distinguished looking. He had soft brown eyes, a Roman nose, a precisely shaped mouth, a firm chin. The outstanding feature of his appearance was the shape of his head. The head was large and well-formed, but I was for long puzzled to account for the singular impression it produced. Then, one day I noticed that it bulged not only in front but behind, and, noticing, reflected upon the rarity of the phenomenon. Many of us have well-proportioned foreheads, but our heads shrink away to nothing behind the ears. We are cranial façades and little more. But in E's case the depth of head behind the ears was, if measured—and I once ventured to measure it—not less than the distance from the ear to the front of the forehead.

In the last war E had been a conscientious objector and, refusing all forms of alternative service, had spent two years in prison. Since then he had taught in a school. He had consistently maintained pacifist opinions, but had never joined any organization for their propagation, and of late years had, as I knew, taken

little part or interest in politics. He justified this abstention, as he once told me, by his conviction that men could not be made better by Act of Parliament, any more than the millennium could be achieved by maximizing production in order to satisfy wants.

E was, I suppose, what would commonly be called a mystic, but, once again, he was not, so far as I knew, a member of any organized religious body. I had no doubt but that E would be opposed to the war on principle and, dissatisfied as I was with D's presentation of the case against war, went to him in the hope of hearing a more edifying version of the reasons for not fulfilling what most people regarded as the first duty of a citizen.

E, as I rather expected, refused to discuss the matter on the political plane. It was, he said, of little or no moment to him whether we beat the Nazis or the Nazis beat us, whether the motives which led Russia to take a hand were ideological or imperialistic, or whether the British blockade would in the long run prove effective or not. He condemned war, he said, because it upset what he called the moral machinery of the universe and turned men's minds away from and not towards reality.

'Of course', he said, 'I cannot expect you to appreciate or even to understand my objections to war, unless you are familiar with the general background of my philosophy; and obviously I cannot expound my philosophy and give you my reasons for holding it now. Yet you must bear with me, if I indicate its main outlines, however baldly, since otherwise my conclusions in regard to war will appear to you as at best unfounded, at worst, utterly meaningless.

'Broadly, then, I hold, for reasons which you cannot expect me to discuss unless I embark upon a disquisition on the metaphysics of mysticism, that this world of apparently solid, tangible objects extended in space is not the only, is not even the real world. It is in an important sense only an appearance of a world which underlies it and expresses itself in it. If the appearance is taken to be real, it becomes misleading, becomes in fact an illusion.

'Appearance', I asked, 'to what? When, for example, I say that so and so's designs have a sinister "appearance", I mean sinister to *somebody*, somebody, that is to say, who conceives himself to be threatened by them, or whose duty it is to frustrate them; not, it is obvious, sinister to the designer or the designer's friends. An appearance, then, I repeat, to what?'

'My answer is', said E, 'an appearance to our familiar everyday mode of consciousness which takes an unreal, because partial, view of things. Why does it do so? Because it is itself not fully real, being, like the world which it believes itself to perceive, a fragmentary and partial expression of a reality that underlies and informs it. This, then, is the first point I want to emphasize. The familiar ego or personal consciousness, with its opinions, ambitions, wants, desires, cravings, aims, is a fiction and so is the world which it inhabits. What then, you may ask, *is* real? The answer is one that it is difficult meaningfully to convey because of the limitations of language. If I were to say that infinite spirit or supra-personal consciousness was real, the words "infinite" and "supra-personal" would immediately convey misleading associations; "infinite" suggesting, perhaps, a spirit of the same kind as our own,

though as much larger than our own as ours is than the spirit of an earwig; "supra-personal", a consciousness like our own, but divested of its personal and particular aspect and, therefore, presumably, not like our own, which makes nonsense. Nevertheless, when I am making an assertion about the ultimate nature of reality I cannot avoid using the term "spirit", any more than I can avoid qualifying it with the epithets "infinite" and "supra-personal", and I have to make such an assertion not because I can demonstrate the steps of reasoning by which it is reached, or establish its truth by methods of which logicians would approve, but because of my conviction that it is possible for us actually to make contact with this reality and subsequently to remember and convey—however inadequately—the nature of the experiences which our contact has brought us.'

'If', I asked, 'reality is spirit, and if our everyday consciousness is at best half real, how *can* it make contact with reality? How can the half-real enter into communion with, how can it even know, the real?'

'It doesn't,' said E. 'It is not through our everyday personal consciousness that the contact is made; it is made through a part of ourselves which lies below the threshold of the surface consciousness. This underlying part of ourselves is not the psycho-analyst's unconscious, that prisoner in an underground dungeon, the harbourer of hates, the fount of emotions, swept by uncontrollable desires and atavistic lusts; it is that part of ourselves by virtue of which we can have experience of the supra-personal consciousness which is reality; it is, therefore, the true or real part of the self, and in discovering or realizing this true self, we also experi-

ence with its mode of experiencing. Experience what? Experience reality, and, since we ourselves are, in respect of our real selves, parts or aspects of the reality which expresses itself in us, in experiencing reality we are at the same time discovering ourselves. Thus to realize the self is to know and to become one with reality; just as to know and become one with reality is to discover the self.

'What, you may ask, do I mean by the expression "to become one with"? Why do I pass from "knowledge of" to "identity with"? It is usual to suppose that, when we know anything, there is a distinction between the subject who knows and the object which is known; that the subject, in other words, stands apart from the object. But when the subject that knows is the real self and the object known is reality, then, since the real self is a part or expression of reality, the process of knowing is no longer *merely* a knowing in which the knower stands outside the object, it is also a process of becoming in which the knower enters into communication with, merges into, in fact "becomes one with" the object. It follows, therefore, that, in so far as we realize our true selves, we are entitled to say that in realizing ourselves we are also becoming one with reality; and to become one with reality is to lose one's own consciousness in that of supra-personal being. If I may put it paradoxically, when we experience reality we experience selflessly, since our consciousness is no longer personal; nevertheless, it is in very truth our own true selves with which we experience and of which we have experience, and I use the word "selflessly" because our true selves are not personal and individual, are not cut off from the true selves of

others, are not, then, in the strict sense of the word *selfish* at all.

'Now what is true of any one of us is true of all of us. Since all our fragmentary personalities are fictitious personalities, since when we transcend these personalities we experience with our true selves an underlying supra-personal reality, and since to experience with the true self is to realize our own continuity with what we experience, is, that is to say, to merge in and to become one with reality, we may add that in experiencing and realizing reality we experience and realize one another. In a word, we all of us, in discovering our true selves, discover one and the same reality, discover, therefore, that we are all expressions of the same unity, discover, therefore, that we are members of one another.

'Now various techniques have been devised by means of which we can cross the threshold which separates our temporal, fictitious personalities from our true or real selves and achieve a realization of our own oneness with reality. If I may use a metaphor, we can eviscerate ourselves of all elements of the personal and the individual so that we become empty shells to be filled with reality; and when once our consciousness is emptied of the thoughts, emotions, and desires which spring from our condition as separate individuals, it is left bare for the entry of reality, which comes flooding into it, and so lifts us up out of the plane of the individual and the personal self. And yet—and here again is the suggestion of paradox—it is in very truth ourselves who are so removed from the plane of ourselves. Thus by following certain psychological techniques we can become conscious of that fundamental

oneness both with reality and with one another of which the great religious teachers have spoken. We can realize, therefore, not with our reasons, but through precisely this experience of oneness, the fundamental necessity for those virtues of kindness, charity, compassion and understanding which constitute our duty towards our neighbour. Contrariwise, the emotions of hatred, anger, hostility, and aggression which separate us from our neighbour, strengthen the individual and personal elements in the soul, emphasize therefore its apartness and fictitiousness, and carry us not towards but away from reality. We can, therefore, make a distinction between the emotions and desires which divide and separate us, which, therefore, develop and perpetuate our individual and fictitious personalities and draw us away from reality, and between those which bring us together, help us to realize our fundamental oneness with each other, diminish what is personal, individual, and fictitious, and emphasize what is common, fundamental, and real.'

'But why', I asked, 'make these tremendous efforts? Why frustrate so many sides, and deny so many of the cravings of our nature? Why check impulse, suppress desire and mortify the flesh? For my part, I have always tried to live according to the light of what is, I suppose, the Greek ideal of life; that is to say, to give every side of my nature a fair deal, and not to weigh the scales in favour of one or in deprivation of another. Who am I, after all, that I should label my desires as wicked and devote all my energies to checking them? Who am I, that I should pronounce my impulses to be unreal—they certainly seem to me real enough—and pretend to myself that I can pretend that they

are not there? Who, indeed, am I, that I should ignore any part of myself? (And has not psycho-analysis, by the way, shown all too clearly the distressing effects of too much checking and suppressing and ignoring?) Who am I, finally, that I should over-indulge my will at the expense of my passions and turn a deaf ear to the voice of reason, which tells me that my passions may within reason be satisfied? In effect, you ask me to place absolute reliance on the obscure deliverances of an equivocal insight into a mystical reality; you forget that this would mean blinding myself to my no less vivid and far more persistent insight into the obvious fact that life here and now is good, and that it is my business to enjoy it while I can.

'What, indeed, *is* the purpose of life? I am blest if I know. I have been told in my time that it is so many things, and as I don't know which of the things I have been told is life's purpose is *really* its purpose—each of the different alleged purposes having been urged with equal dogmatism and authority—I have always thought that the safest thing to do is to assume that life has no purpose except such as I can see in it here and now; and the only purpose that I can see here and now is the sane and rational enjoyment of living. Man's life—you know the simile—is like the passage of a bird through a lighted hall. On each side is darkness; for a little while only does the bird pass through the light. And what is the moral? That we should make the most of the light while it lasts, by every method at our disposal. And that doesn't mean checking and inhibiting and mortifying and denying, in the interests of some complex and obscure conception of the nature of the true self, a conception which, by the way, may be

wholly mistaken. It means living out fully to every side of one's being here and now, even if it *is* only one's apparent being. And I ask you to remember that this that I am sketching is no individual creed of mine, a view of life which has nothing better to recommend it than the self-conscious egotism of a single individual; on the contrary, it has an immense weight of authority behind it. "Passion holds up the bottom of the world while genius paints its roof"; "the Palace of Wisdom lies through the gateways of excess"; "the only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it"; "success in life consists in knowing where to stop and then going a little bit further" or—more cynically—"the hypocrite is one who combines the smooth appearance of virtue with the solid satisfactions of vice"—in these and a hundred other aphorisms men have in all ages expressed their conviction that the right way to take life is simply to enjoy it as much and as variously as possible.'

'Very possibly,' said E. 'But do they enjoy it? There's the rub. And, more particularly, do they enjoy it in this year of disgrace 1939? Since you have produced your own string of aphorisms, I think I am entitled to return in kind, and to remind you of the fact that throughout the multitudinous disharmonies of human thought there has run like a recurrent motif the denunciation of the life of sensual gratification, not because it is wicked, but because it is not gratifying; because considered as an investment, it simply doesn't pay dividends. It happens for a variety of reasons that this traditional wisdom of the ages has been forgotten in our own. But there is no lack of evidence for its prevalence and continuity in almost every other.

'Here, for example, are the Buddhists insisting that it is only in so far as one succeeds in damming the source of desire and cutting off the roots of craving that one can escape the misery of perpetual rebirth in the world of unreality. Here is Lao Tse denouncing ambition and bidding us never be first in the world. Here is Christ warning us against laying up for ourselves treasures on earth; treasures, that is to say, of possession and enjoyment and satisfaction. Here is Plato telling us that most of our pleasures are conditioned by and dependent upon a preceding state of wanting or craving which is painful, and that without this necessary condition, without, therefore, the pain, there can be no pleasure. Or here is Plato, again, affirming that even by the purely hedonistic standard, the standard which values human life in terms of excess of pleasure over pain, a man will be well-advised to submit his desires to the rule which reason prescribes. The rule which, according to Plato, reason prescribes, is, as you forgot to mention when you were speaking of the Greek attitude to life, a pretty strict one. There wasn't much junketing in Plato's ideal State, and though there seems to have been a certain amount of "sleeping around", even "sleeping around" seems to have been regarded as a duty rather than a pleasure—not perhaps surprising, when one reflects upon the education and characteristics of Plato's female Guardians!

'Aristotle follows with his famous "by-product" theory of pleasure. You cannot, he insists, take the kingdom of pleasure by storm; you cannot, that is to say, get pleasure by directly aiming at it, for pleasure, like coke, is a by-product. It is, you will remember, like the bloom on the cheek of a young man in perfect

health. Eluding direct pursuit, pleasure consents to grace activities devoted to ends disinterestedly desired, to scholarship, for example, to science or art or social betterment or even to God.

'Here, again, is Schopenhauer affirming that if life is to be regarded as a commercial balance sheet with pleasure on the credit side and pain on the debit, then life must be accounted a failure, and drawing as a consequence Buddha's deduction that, if one wants to avoid a surplus of pain over pleasure, one will be well-advised to free oneself from the cravings of desire. And all the time that the philosophers and moralists have been brooding on life and denouncing the gratification of the senses as a snare and coining impolite aphorisms about pleasure, the poets have been singing of the will-o'-the-wisp of desire and the vanity of human wishes. The Bible began it: "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity." From the poets there has ascended through the ages a cry of unanimous approbation. So pleased indeed have they been with the preacher's text, that they have been embroidering it ever since. Do you, for example, remember Keats *On Melancholy*?

> *She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die;*
> *And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips*
> *Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,*
> *Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips.*

Shakespeare returns to the topic again and again; with Pope it is a favourite theme; the Tenth Satire of Juvenal is about nothing else. But I needn't remind you of poetry which you probably know much better than I do. I draw attention merely to the poets' conclusion,

which is that man moves heaven and earth to satisfy his wants, and lo and behold there is no satisfaction. You get your heart's desire and it turns out, quite frankly, to be undesirable.

'In putting to you again my question: "Do people enjoy it?" I ask you, then, to reflect upon the prevalence in all ages and among all peoples of the testimony to the effect that, by and large, they do not; to reflect, too, upon the very good reasons which are adduced to show why they do not. The first is the quite simple reason that appetite grows with what it feeds on. Consequently, the more assiduously you satisfy, the greater the need for satisfaction becomes. As the need grows acute, it becomes a pain. Hence one is driven by the spur of pain, which grows ever sharper, to obtain an alleviation which—and here is a second complaint—grows ever fainter. To put it in a nutshell, one begins by taking action to obtain a pleasure; one ends by taking action to allay a craving. For example, the youth begins by smoking cigarettes because each cigarette gives him pleasure; he ends by smoking them because the condition of not smoking them is a pain. Thus he spends an ever increasing amount of time and trouble and money in order to obtain an ever diminishing amount of satisfaction. And what is true of cigarette smoking is true, in its greater degree, of drinking and copulating and drug-taking; is true, in its different kind, of ambition, whether it expresses itself in the love of power, in the love of riches, or even in the love of fame.

'If you ask me why this should be so, why satisfaction diminishes as craving grows, I should answer that it is in the last resort because the self is a fiction, and

because its pleasures are fictitious pleasures. Consequently, if the mistake is made of regarding them as real and of attempting indefinitely to extend them, the attempt sooner or later stultifies itself. There can, that is to say, be no real and lasting satisfaction for those who live on the plain of unreality, since the unreal, just because it *is* unreal, is shot through with contradictions, and, if we persist in taking it to be real, the contradictions in due course reveal themselves. Thus the greater efforts we make to obtain pleasure, the less pleasure we get; the more desires we satisfy, the less satisfaction we obtain; the more we feast, the less our feasting pleases; the more time we save, the less we have to spare, and so on. But if you like to say that this answer is too metaphysical for you, that it presupposes the acceptance of the assumptions which I began by indicating and which you do not share, and that you prefer a more mundane answer in terms of the nature of what scientists call the human organism, let us say that the human body like any other living organism, if perpetually stimulated, gets tired, and, because it *does* get tired, an ever greater stimulus is required to produce an equivalent, an equivalent which becomes in time a diminished, effect. One cannot, for example, continue to enjoy the smell of a flower; some nerve, I suppose, becomes tired and ceases to respond to the stimulus of the odour.

'Another obvious question is, why, if my account of the matter is true, do people continue to devote their lives to the pursuit of pleasure which they never really enjoy? The answer reveals another of the many contradictions which beset the search for real satisfaction on the plane of the unreal.

'The particular contradiction in this case is that the need for a particular pleasure, once aroused, craves satisfaction in order that it, the need, may be alleviated. The patient—it is difficult to resist the word in this connection—spurred by his craving, resorts to the only form of alleviation he knows, the drinking, the drugs, the sexual gratification, the exercise of power or the playing to the gallery, and for a time it really does alleviate; that is to say, for a time it removes need and gives pleasure, but—and here the contradiction arises —the alleviation only aggravates the condition which it temporarily cures. Once the effect has passed, the same condition returns, only in an aggravated form. The sufferer from a "hang-over" wants a drink more badly than before; the man who has temporarily gratified his desires with sexual stimulation and relief wants more stimulation and wants it more intensely when the effects of the relief have passed, and so on. Hence people continue to devote their lives to the search for pleasure, which it is not in the nature of life to give them. Now all this is commonplace enough, and I have only dragged you through what must seem to you a string of pious platitudes because of your addiction to the error that the only meaning or purpose of life is to be found in its enjoyment and your consequential question, then why not enjoy it?'

'Well, all this may be as it may be,' I said, 'though for my part I find most of it unintelligible, and what I do understand unacceptable. But what do you mean by suggesting that the life of pleasure, which is at all times suspect, has become quite peculiarly unsatisfactory in our own? What is there about the times in which we are now living which should so specially

provoke this sermon, and what is its bearing upon your attitude to the war?'

'That is another story, and a long one,' said E. 'Too long to tell now. But suppose that we short-circuit it by granting certain things: (1) That there is a general agreement that something has gone badly wrong with our civilization; for example, in the Victorian age most people believed in the infinite continuance of something that was called progress. Now we talk about the rise and fall of civilizations, and are growing quite accustomed to regard our own as one that has passed its prime and is beginning to decay. (2) That the recurrence of war presents us with new and quite peculiarly pressing problems. This is the second major war within twenty-five years. This, you might say, looking back over history, is not an excessive allowance. It is not. But a new factor has appeared on the scene in the power with which science has equipped us, and more particularly the power of destruction. This has grown so great that the simple truth is that we can no longer afford the luxury of war. If we go on in this way, we shall bring our whole civilization about our ears. (3) That there is some latent contradiction at the basis of our economic system. We cannot, it appears, distribute what we produce, with the result that we get vast and growing unemployment (except, of course, in war), and the famous "want in plenty" paradox. Many hold that this paradox is a necessary concomitant of a declining capitalist system, and conclude that capitalism must be superseded by a different method of organizing the economic life of mankind. Very possibly they are right. But in any event, it would be agreed that our economic system, which

has functioned fairly successfully for the last hundred and fifty years, cannot continue to function without radical alteration. (4) That our existing religion is obsolete, that few young people believe in it, and that as a result the contemporary generation grows to maturity without a creed and, by consequence, without a code. Nature abhors a spiritual no less than a physical vacuum, so men worship the State instead of the Almighty, and make gods on earth to take the place of the God who is no longer in heaven.

'(5) As a result, the lives of contemporary men and women are oppressed by a quite unprecedented lack of purpose and objective. There has never been a time when people were at once so aimless and embarrassed by so much leisure in which to become aware of their aimlessness. The contemporary conception of good living centres upon the accumulation of valued pieces of matter and the rapid alteration of their position in space; it centres, in other words, upon possession and speed.

'Modern Western civilization is the result of endowing with the fruits of the work of a dozen men of genius a population which is emotionally at the level of savages and culturally at that of schoolboys.

'Its conception of the good life is so debased that our rich men retiring from business can find no occupation for their leisure but striking little round pieces of matter with long thin ones in the shape of bats, mallets, cues, rackets, and clubs, and introducing pieces of metal from a distance into the bodies of defenceless birds and animals; pursuits which prove so boring when adopted as staple occupations week in and week out, instead of as diversions for the week-end, that

their victims return in dudgeon to their desks and continue to make money which they do not want in despair of finding life tolerable without the hard labour to which they have been accustomed.

'More and more possessions, faster and faster movement, better and more elaborate games, drinks, girls, movies—such are the alleviations which our civilization offers its members, such are the standards of value which it has taught them to recognize. Is the prospect inviting? Are the standards adequate? Obviously they are not. Not to put too fine a point upon it, granted that we escape destruction in war and economic collapse in peace, granted that all goes for the best, and that our civilization continues to prosper according to its lights, it is heading straight for Aldous Huxley's Brave New World. Now we do not like the prospect of *Brave New World.* Hence the gloom and uncertainty of our times, and hence too—and here I come back to your question—our special and specially urgent need to escape from the bondage of desire, a need which arises from our having so much more time to desire in, so much more energy to desire with.

'We are apprehensive about the future, but it is idle to expect our civilization to improve unless there is a change in its human material. People cannot remain as they are and at the same time live in a better world, for the world they live in is an inheritance from what people have been and a projection of what they are. As long as they continue to live on the level of unreality, their lives will continue to be unsatisfying. How, then, you may ask, are we to be saved? By ceasing to live on the level of unreality and making contact with reality, that is to say, with our true selves. And the first step

on this road has been taken when we realize that what chiefly binds us to unreality is the craving of unsatisfied desire.'

'Sounds difficult,' I said.

'It is difficult, but it's not impossible. What is more, there are, as I have already said, certain psychological techniques which can be learnt and practised as a result of which the transference from the unreal level to the real can be made. These techniques are summed up in the words "meditation, recollection, and contemplation". They have always been known in the East; they were once known in the West, but as a result of the development of science and the consequent establishment of a civilization whose standards are purely material, which identifies good with increase of speed, gratification of appetites, and multiplication of commodities, they have been forgotten. Yet it is only if they can be recovered and practised by a substantial number of people that our civilization can continue. Luckily there are reasons for thinking that they are in course of being rediscovered, or rather, that human beings who practise them naturally and instinctively are beginning to emerge.'

'And what', I asked, 'may these reasons be?'

'They are connected with evolution. I am suggesting that if our civilization is to survive, men's consciousness must be enlarged so that they realize their true selves and become aware of a new order of being which is the real order, and of their own participation in that order. Now this enlargement of consciousness, I would venture to suggest, is the next item on the evolutionary programme. Evolution has already passed through two main phases. First, the physical phase;

creatures were successively evolved who were first progressively larger and then progressively more complicated. The limits of physical evolution were reached in man; hence, if man was to continue the process of development, he must contrive a new method of evolving. He did so, and introduced the second, or technical phase of evolution. Briefly, this consists in the making of tools and machines which, biologically regarded, are limbs which we have contrived outside ourselves to supplement our physical inheritance. Thus we make cranes and lifts to do the work of arms; trains and cars to take the place of legs; we even devise limbs that we have not got and equip ourselves with aeroplanes to take the place of wings. We have now reached the end of this second stage of evolution, and unless we can contrive a further method of evolving, we shall relapse and fall back. The technical phase is, indeed, already showing signs of decadence in the shape of increased specialization without co-ordinating purpose—scientists reach their results in watertight compartments, while philosophy and religion, which should connect the compartments and pool the results, are sterile or derided—and in the accumulation of material resources which we do not know how to use. Whereas at the end of the first phase the Mesozoic reptiles continued to accumulate fresh tissues without evolving the brains which might have directed their use, at the end of the second, the typical youth in his car accumulates fresh speed in order to save time, without the faintest idea of what to do with the time when he has saved it.

'Granted the need for a new method of evolving, on what plane will it take place? Obviously, upon the

psychical. Hence I look forward to a new mutation occurring this time in the soul of man, as a result of which his consciousness will be so enlarged that it becomes capable of conceiving and pursuing ends which are commensurate with his technical mastery of means.

'But if this mutation is to occur, we must co-operate in its production; in other words, we can only change, if we will to do so. Hitherto evolution has been a blind, instinctive thrust. In man the evolutionary process has emerged into consciousness and can be consciously intended. Hence man's own consciousness decides and can alone decide whether he will mutate or fall back into degeneracy because of his failure to carry forward the evolutionary process. But the mutation, once it is decided on, is instantaneous.'

'This is all very interesting,' said I. 'But it seems to me to belong to the category of pure speculation; and I should like to add to the word "pure" the word "wild". Why, I should like to know, is it to be assumed that evolution *is* to continue? Why, in other words, should fresh mutations be expected to occur at all? And what are your reasons for thinking that a mutation is likely to occur, if it does occur, in time to save our civilization? Why, in fact, regard it as immediately practicable biological politics?'

'As to why evolution should continue, the answer is because of the dynamic character of the universal consciousness of which the evolutionary process is an expression. I cannot substantiate this answer here; you must accept it as part of the general metaphysical hypothesis. For my belief in the imminence of another mutation I can produce a number of reasons. First, evolu-

tion has ceased in all other species because they have reached the limits of specialization. In man alone further evolution is possible precisely because he has not specialized; indeed, so far as bodily development is concerned he has specialized in unspecialization. Moreover, we find that although his physical evolution has ceased for an unusually long period, yet man continues to be animated by immense reserves of energy. This energy, which is at present surplus, shows itself in an unprecedented sensitivity to pain and an unprecedented activity of sex. Finally, the whole tempo of evolution is rapidly accelerating and the periods between mutations diminish. The steps of my argument are, therefore, as follows: (*a*) evolution must go on somehow; (*b*) it cannot go on in the animals; (*c*) it cannot go on physically or technically in man, therefore (*d*) it must go on psychically in man and take the form of a mutation in consciousness.

'As a result of this mutation the barrier between consciousness and the unconscious will disappear; we shall consciously realize the oneness of our lives with those of others, and through our enlarged consciousness we shall enjoy a direct insight into the nature of reality. Also, incidentally, we shall be free from the spur of sexual desire, lose much of our sensitivity to pain, and cease to resort to violence in our human relationships.

'And that brings me at last to the bearing of all this on the subject of war. The mutation, I have said, will not occur, unless we will it to occur and help it to occur by our own conduct. Therefore, to will and to act rightly is to assist the evolutionary process. If the mutation does occur, it will result in an enlargement of

human consciousness which will remove the ego from the plane of unreality and open it to the inflowing of reality, which will emancipate it from the flow of time and plant it in eternity, which will transcend its separateness and restore it to unity. Therefore, to will and to act rightly is to move away from unreality and towards reality; and to achieve reality is to achieve freedom from our fictitious personalities, freedom therefore from the spur of desire, from the sense of loneliness and from the promptings of ambition; in other words, it is to achieve serenity and peace.'

'Can you not', I asked, 'tell us more about this condition which you call unity with reality?'

'No, of course not. How could I? Language was invented to serve a quite definite purpose, the purpose of enabling people to communicate with one another. To communicate what? Thoughts about things in this world, thoughts, that is to say, on the plane of unreality. Language, in other words, serves a biological need. The sentry who told the tribe that the forest fire was approaching the village, the advance scout who informed the caravan that a well had been found in the desert, were helping the tribe and the caravan to survive. Language, then, communicates the meanings appropriate to the things of this world, and since the "things of this world" are mainly material things and thoughts about them, language is all about material things and thoughts about material things. Moreover, since material things were noticed long before thoughts, it is not very good even at describing thoughts. How, then, can it be used to convey meanings which are neither of things nor of thoughts? How, in fact, can that which is semi-real and which was invented to

serve the uses of semi-reality convey what belongs to reality?'

'He who has crossed the threshold which divides the experience of the fictitious separated ego from the experience of the true self which is, as I have explained, an experience of reality, has three alternatives. He can keep silence, which is perhaps the wisest; he can invent a special technical language of his own, a sort of mystical algebra, in which case nobody will understand it but himself and the few initiates to whom he has taught it; or he can make shift to use as best he can the instrument that human need has forged, and try by means of metaphor, simile, and analogy to suggest some of the qualities of his strictly ineffable experience. Now the success of such an attempt will depend upon whether the person who listens to or reads him has enjoyed any trace of similar experiences in his own life. If he has, then he possesses a bell upon which the communication can strike and arouse reverberations which are reminiscent of his own past experience. But if there has been no past experience, then the words of the mystic's communication will be strictly meaningless. How, for example, could I convey to you any suggestion of what it is that I am experiencing, when I say I have toothache, unless you at some time or other have yourself had toothache. The most, I suppose, that I could succeed in conveying would be the idea of some kind of pain connected with the teeth; and since one kind of pain is not, after all, so very different from another, and since we all of us have experienced pain of some sort at some time, my words would not be entirely meaningless. But to the experience of reality there is literally nothing in this world,

that is to say, in the ego's experience of this world, that is analogous, so that the mystic succeeds in conveying to the non-mystic less, far less, than the toothache sufferer to the man who has never had toothache. That is why to most people the mystics with their talk of a "dazzling darkness", or a "delicious desert" or "the drop in the ocean and the ocean in the drop" seem to be simply drivelling. Or, worse still, the familiar words are interpreted according to the familiar and, therefore, totally misleading meanings of everyday life, so that the hearer really pictures a desert which contrives to remain a desert and yet mysteriously not to be so very desert-like after all. I have no doubt that these considerations inspired the aphorism of Dr. Johnson who, after listening to the reading of some unintelligible metaphysical poet—I forget his name—expressed himself as follows: "If", he said, "Mr. X has experienced the unutterable, then Mr. X would do well not to try to utter it."

'But although nothing can be conveyed of the experience itself, from the general metaphysical premisses which I began by asking you to accept—and which, I agree, only personal experience can verify—something may be deduced. Which brings me back again to the question of the war; for one of the things that may be deduced is that war must be always and must be in all circumstances wrong.'

'I shall', I said, 'try to follow the steps of the deduction, if you will indicate them.'

'Well, I have said that reality is one, that our true selves are parts of reality, that they are, therefore, parts of one another, and that when we experience reality and enter into our true selves, we cease to be

individuals travailing in time and become for the moment timeless expressions of the universal reality. What follows? Those emotions which separate and divide us from others intensify and perpetuate the ego by emphasizing its boundaries. Therefore, they turn us away from reality and confirm us in unreality. What are these emotions? They are anger, aggressiveness, panic, fear, hatred, malice—the emotions which war begets and on which it thrives. Conversely, those emotions which are bound up with and arise from our fellow feeling emphasize our oneness with others and so turn us towards reality. What are these emotions? Compassion, sympathy, understanding, above all love. In fact precisely the emotions which war discourages. We are never so convinced of our oneness with other people as when we love them; never so aware of our difference from them, never, therefore, so enclosed within the rigid boundaries of our own ego as when we are hating them.

'What I have tried so baldly to summarize, all the great religious teachers have known and taught. Buddha, for example, bids us get rid of desire, for desire ties us to the plane of the temporal, that is, of the unreal, and rivets upon us the shackles of personality. Lao Tse finds that in contentment, that is to say, in not wanting things, is the secret of happiness. It is also the secret of clear vision. "Before the eye can see, it must be incapable of tears," says the mystic. But it is Jesus Christ whose recognition of the same truth is most striking and most directly applicable to the present situation. Those texts that have so puzzled the commentators—the texts about loving your enemies, about not taking thought for the morrow, about mul-

tiplying things upon him that has and taking away from him that has not even the things that he has—are all directly derivable from the fundamental premisses that I have indicated, the premisses which the insight of Christ recognized and whose conclusions He sought to apply to the problems of human life upon the earth. "Love your enemies", because separateness is only between our fictitious personalities and we are, at the level of reality, quite literally members of one another; hence to harm any is to harm ourselves, is to harm all. All violence, in other words, upsets the moral machinery of the universe, which has later to be redressed. "Take no thought for the morrow," since taking thought for the morrow only enables us to succeed on the plane of the temporal and the personal; it enables us, for example, to increase our salaries or to make bigger profits. Why increase our salaries and make bigger profits? Because with more money we can accumulate more numerous possessions and satisfy more appetites, in other words, confirm and strengthen the unreal part of ourselves. Or by taking thought, we improve our status in the world, help forward our careers, or achieve positions of prominence and power; positions, therefore, which enable us to exercise control over others. Or by taking thought, we are enabled to pursue ideals, ideals of country-saving, empire-enlarging, or even of social reforming, which are only magnified projections of our own personalities, or rather, of some one desire or element in our personalities to gratify which we are prepared to subordinate all the rest. Thus even in pursuing ideals we are taking thought for the morrow, striving that our personalities may to-morrow be enlarged by the realization of their

projections. "And he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath," because we start life with a glimmering apprehension of the true state of affairs, but, if we live the life of impulse and desire, we confirm ourselves in unreality and the glimmer fades, or is blown out by the gales of desire. And since desire grows with what it feeds on, the more we gratify it, the more insistent it becomes; thus we are tossed hither and thither on the waves of desire, yielding, like a rudderless boat, to whatever current flows most strongly at the moment. Or one desire establishes itself as tyrant over the rest and demands that everything shall be subordinated to *its* gratification. Thus the longer we love the personal life, the more we look for satisfaction in the plane of unreality, the harder we find it to leave that plane, since, as our fictitious self becomes stronger, its attachment to the plane of unreality also strengthens. Conversely, the virtues that bring us nearer to one another, compassion, sympathy, love, help to unite us with those who are the objects of our compassionating and loving. Thus they tend to break down the boundaries of the self and to assist it to realize the consciousness which is larger than that of the self, which is also the consciousness of reality.

'The practice of such virtues produces a corresponding effect upon those who are its objects. Hate a person and treat him with violence, and he will respond with hatred and violence. Seek to understand and to love him, and instead of retreating into the fortress of his individual personality, he will open himself to the influence of your understanding and respond to your love by becoming lovable. That saying of Christ's about turning the other cheek is good moral

politics, for, if you turn it often enough and persistently enough, you make it impossible for your adversary to hit you on it, if only because you make it impossible for him to remain your adversary. Thus the practice of the virtues sets up a virtuous circle, just as that of the vices sets up a vicious one. Just as in thought, by taking the risk of the noblest hypothesis being true you increase the chances of its truth, so in action by taking the risk of behaving virtuously you increase the chance of a virtuous response in others.

'What I am trying to say—and I am sorry it has taken so long; I do assure you that its application to the war will be as short as it is obvious—is that the universe is morally like a piece of machinery, in the sense that what you put into it will determine what comes out of it. The Greeks recognized this, albeit vaguely, and their Fates and Furies are witnesses to their recognition. A more explicit recognition is accorded by the conception of Nemesis. If men grow too big for their boots and throw their weight about, then the gods will take them down a peg. There is, in other words, a Nemesis that waits on presumption—ὕβρις, as the Greeks put it, is followed by ἄτη; pride, in our watered down version of the doctrine, goes before a fall.

'The truth that the Greeks glimpsed in its application to pride is more clearly and forcibly recognized by the Hindus. Indeed, the Hindu doctrine of Karma is the most explicit acknowledgement of it by any religion. The doctrine of Karma is based on a recognition of the fact that the universe is governed by a moral law. The moral law requires that all wrongdoing must be compensated, compensated by suffering on the part

of the wrongdoer. Thus, when we suffer, our suffering is never either causeless or pointless. For it is suffering which we have brought upon ourselves by previous wrongdoing, for which we are required to compensate. The wrongdoing in question may have been, usually has been, performed in a previous life, and according to most forms of the doctrine, the status which the individual assumes in any particular life is determined by the nature and amount of the wrongdoing in previous lives for which in his present life he is required to compensate. The extent to which he will in fact compensate is a matter for his own determination and within his own control. Thus, although we are subject to the force of Karma, we are nevertheless free ourselves to mould that force; free, that is to say, to make our Karma for the future.

'The doctrine of Karma presupposes that dual nature of the individual which I have tried to describe; it presupposes, that is to say, that just as the familiar world is only an expression of the real world, so the individual and personal nature of a man is only an expression of his real nature. In a life badly lived these two natures, the real and the apparent, may turn against each other, and, though we cannot altogether extinguish our spiritual natures, yet by developing and concentrating upon our purely earthly desires, we may overlay our true natures and drive them, as it were, into the background of our conscious being. This is to subordinate the higher to the lower, the greater value to the less, the real to the apparent; in a word, it is the wrong way of life. The approved method of avoiding this error is continuously to relate our lives to the background of the underlying reality in which they are cast;

to live our lives, as we should say in the west, in the shadow of eternity.

'If we live in such a way as to ignore the existence of our true natures, the moral machinery of Karma is set going and, sooner or later, we have to pay for our mistake. We pay for violence by becoming the victims of the violence of others; for lust, by losing the power to love; for love of money, by losing the love of everything else; for self-assertion, by raising against ourselves a host of enemies; for giving rein to desire, by becoming the slaves of our desires; for nourishing cruel and vindictive passions, by bringing upon ourselves the wars of which our vindictiveness has sown the seed. It is no accident, then, as you will see, that war settles nothing; no accident, that war in the present breeds further war in the future. Conversely, by acting in conformity with our true natures, which means observing a right relation between our temporal and our eternal selves, we keep the temporal self in its place and take from it the power to stand between us, between our real self, that is to say, and what is eternal.

'So much for general exposition, and please forgive me for having been so wordy. Now suppose that you grant my hypothesis about the true nature of the self and the spiritual nature of the reality to which the real self belongs; I shall then ask you to accept two corollaries. First, that a semi-real creature such as a human being, or rather, a creature who is, in respect of one part of himself partly real, but in respect of another is grafted on to reality, should seek to emphasize and to realize his real aspect and to diminish his unreal. People often ask, what is the object of life? You have

yourself done so to-day. The answer is, to escape from the prison of the false ego and to realize our unity with the universal consciousness. Secondly, that a determination to live according to the life of the unreal self brings in the long run its own Nemesis. If I may so put it, continued living on the level of unreality is self-contradictory because, while the cravings of the unreal self grow ever greater, their satisfaction grows ever less. As I have tried to show, the life of pleasure yields diminishing returns even in terms of pleasure. Thus, by living the life according to desire we condemn our desires to frustration. The life according to desire is, therefore, a self-stultifying life.

'This being so, it is impossible to look for any improvement either in the self or in the world, as long as our lives are passed on the plane of unreality. There can be no improvement in the ordinary life of man because, given the moral machinery of the universe, the same causes will always produce the same effects. Substitute wealth for poverty, and you will substitute for the vices of poverty, which are meanness, squalor, narrowness, and avarice, the vices of wealth, which are ostentation, vanity, vulgarity, and luxury. Give men power, and they will use their power to gratify more of their desires and to gratify them more intensively; and since among human desires the desire for aggression and domination are pre-eminent, men will use their greater powers to destroy one another. It seems probable, indeed, that our civilization, which has increased its power without correspondingly increasing its wisdom, will in fact destroy itself for precisely this reason. The moral which I want to draw is that, as long as people remain as they are, the world

will remain as it is, for the world being a projection of the people in it, the projection can never be better than the projectors. It follows that until human beings become better, the world they live in cannot become better. It follows also that there can be no progress on the plane of economics and technology; there can be progress only on the plane of ethics and religion. Granted that our position on the plane of the latter remains unchanged, while on the plane of the former we advance from power to power, and, if I am right, you will not only not see the world grow better, you will see it grow worse.

'And now, once more, the application to war. To take part in violence of any kind, whether by initiating it or resisting it, is to move away from reality and to rivet the chains of unreality both upon oneself and upon one's adversary. To take part in violence, therefore, is to contradict the first of my corollaries. Moreover, granted the functioning of what I have called the moral machinery of the universe, one's violence will have consequences which stretch out beyond itself and perpetuate themselves until they are liquidated, so that, however attractive the immediate objectives the long-term results of violence will be evil. The consequences of the last war strikingly demonstrate this truth. Again, violence is contrary to the purpose of the evolutionary process with which, as I have tried to show, we should endeavour to co-operate in the hope of producing a new mutation of human consciousness. Finally, to surrender oneself to the impulse of violence is to gratify desire, is to live, therefore, on the plane of the temporal self, is to doom oneself, therefore, to self-contradiction and self-stultification. In all these ways

violent action contradicts the second of my corollaries.'

'What, then,' I asked. 'would you do if you were threatened by a régime of violence such as that which now has power in Germany?'

'I should seek to understand its nature and to make such concessions as would, I hope, transform its nature. If these failed and it persisted in its aggression, I should resist, but my resistance would not be violent. I should disobey every evil order given by Germans, at whatever cost to myself, just as I should now disobey evil orders given by Englishmen, as, for example, orders to kill Germans; and I should try to persuade others to do the same. And I should passively resist, not because I expected to secure some political advantage thereby, hoping to convince the Germans that their policy was mistaken, or to force them to withdraw from a country which mass, though non-violent, resistance made it impossible for them to run—I hope I have said enough to convince you that the object of right action is not to secure goods on the plane of politics; indeed, you cannot by right action secure political goods any more than you can by political action secure real as opposed to apparent goods—but because any other kind of resistance would be simply wrong. And by saying that it would be "wrong" I mean that it would weaken the real self and strengthen the fictitious.

'What is more, the more advanced the consciousness, the greater the harm. Violence by animals does no harm to the soul; it is instinctive and, therefore, automatic. A lion can no more be blamed for tearing his prey than a stone for rolling down hill. The savage has achieved a rudimentary form of self-consciousness and in respect of his real self may, therefore, be re-

garded as an expression of reality, but the principle of reality is in him but feebly expressed and is, so long as he remains a savage, more submerged even than it is with us. The savage in fact is nearly, not quite, an automaton. In so far as he kills and is violent, he is acting as the end product of the forces, biological, hereditary, environmental, and social, that have made him what he is, and being the determined product of these forces he can hardly be blamed for what they determine him to do. The actions of the ordinary "civilized" human being are also for the most part automatic; less so, perhaps, than those of the savage, but very little less. He hates and is violent because his country calls and the herd approves. Herd instinct reinforced by the influence of training and education determine the great majority of his responses to life, and in so far as his responses are determined, he is again blameless. He is to blame only in respect of his failure to win free from the influences that determine him by realizing his true self. But the self-conscious, reflective man is to blame much more. Here is an intelligent and cultivated man, a student and a scholar, well read in the wisdom of the ages, versed in the precepts of the religious teachers, acquainted with what great men have thought and said memorably about life. His intelligence is broad, his sympathies wide, his susceptibilities refined. Now if such a one fails to realize, if he fails even to suspect the truth that this life is only a mask of reality, then I should say, in respect of his lack of preceptiveness, he is blameworthy. If, realizing it, he nevertheless acts contrary to his realization, he is in a higher degree blameworthy. If, finally, knowing as, in the light of his more developed

consciousness he cannot help but know, that what he does is wrong, such a one still acts violently, the harm that he does is greater in proportion as his consciousness is the more developed, greater, because the jolt which is given by his action to the moral machinery of the universe is more violent—it is as if one had thrown a spanner into the more, rather than into the less, sensitive parts of a machine—greater, again, from the point of view of reality, because the betrayal of reality is greater.'

'Then is your attitude to the war confined to a determination non-violently to resist the Germans, if ever they should come to this country? Have you nothing to say, do you propose to do nothing until they have come?—I ask this because, at the moment, it seems so unlikely that they will ever come at all—except to perch yourself on the column of a mystical aloofness, fold your hands, contemplate your stomach, and look down on the struggles of suffering humanity from the altitude of your Olympian complacency?'

E had seemed at once so superior, so serene, and so secure, that I had been unable to resist the jibe, but I had scarcely made it, when I felt to the full its injustice, apologized, and withdrew. E, as indifferent, apparently, to the apology as to the jibe which had provoked it, proceeded calmly to answer my question.

'What I shall do is to help to relieve suffering wherever I find it.'

'Does "wherever I find it" mean that, if you were a younger man, you would take non-combatant work in the army, in the R.A.M.C., for example, as a stretcher-bearer or as a first-aid man?'

'Of course it does. I cannot follow those conscien-

tious objectors who form, I fear, a majority, who are prepared to make distinctions in the matter of the good they do; who will relieve suffering here but not there; help the injured in a railway accident, but not help the injured in an air raid; or help the injured in an air raid, but not the airman whose aeroplane has crashed in an attempt to beat it off; or help the airman who has attempted to beat it off, but not the airman who has dropped the bombs; or help the airman defending at home, but not the soldier fighting at the front. They won't, many of them say, consent to become parts of the military machine; or they won't help to patch up a wounded man because, when patched up, he will go and fight again. I am only too much afraid that these are polite ways of saying that they will not consent to go and help where the helping may be dangerous.

'Now, given the hypothesis from which I start, helping anyone anywhere and in any circumstances, helping them in mind or helping them in body, makes for unity and assists the principle of reality; refusing to help for whatever reason, emphasizes individuality and separateness and so assists the principle of non-reality. Now this, you may say, is a very humble aim. I daresay it is humble, but, pursuing it, I shall at least do no harm. And of how many contemporary activities can that be said? I would devote my energies to working against war, but I don't believe that war can be stopped by ideological propaganda, political measures, or economic changes; it will only be stopped, if human nature wants it stopped, that is to say if human nature itself changes. I am prepared to work for a change in human nature in the hope of inducing men to realize

the facts relating to the nature of the self which I have tried to set before you, and to live in a way which is consonant with them. But I have little hope of succeeding. You cannot change people by preaching. The most you can do is to make them aware of the nature of real existence in contrast to their own semi-real lives—this is what I have tried to do in your case today—but whether, when they are made aware, they will act in accordance with their awareness is a matter which they and they alone can decide.

'Few realize the truth and fewer still act upon their realization; few in fact are called, but fewer still are chosen. So it always has been, and so, I suspect, it always will be. Therefore, although I work in this sense for a change in human nature, I don't expect it. I don't believe that the average, sensual man will ever cease to be what he is, will cease that is to say, to be the average sensual man, living on the plane of unreality and bobbing about like a cork on the waves of his desires, as he moves rudderless over the sea of life, yielding to whatever current sways him most strongly at the moment. All this, I suppose, is one way of saying that the principle of evil is too strong in the world for more than a few in each generation to break the fetters of individuality, to win free of craving and to realize their true natures. So I come back to this—the most I can hope to do while the war lasts and perhaps after, is to relieve suffering and distress wherever I find them.'

'And is that', I asked, 'all that your doctrine comes to in practice?'

'Not quite. What I am repudiating is the possibility of regenerating the mass of mankind by moral exhortation or by moral example. Look, for instance, at the

history of Christianity. For two thousand years, from a hundred thousand pulpits, in a million sermons, men have been told that they ought to be meek, gentle, kind, and loving; that they ought to resist evil not with a contrary evil, but with good; that they ought to set their thoughts not upon earthly things, but upon heavenly ones; that they ought to think of their neighbour more than of themselves, and of God more than of either. With what result? After two thousand years of the treatment, the behaviour of the crowds of modern London is, by and large, morally indistinguishable from that of the crowds of ancient Athens. In some respects it is a little better; in some a little worse. I conclude that you cannot by moral exhortation make people better. If, as I suspect, most men are incorrigible, you cannot help them individually to be better, any more than you can help them collectively; in other words, you can no more make them good by moral precept and advice than you can by Act of Parliament. Most actions on the plane of unreality being harmful, the most you can hope for is to induce them not to act, at least not to act so continuously, so drastically, and so blindly. A little less intensity of belief, a little less addiction to ideals, a little less intolerance in proclaiming beliefs, a little less zeal in serving and, incidentally, in persecuting for ideals, and the world would have been a considerably less miserable place. Most human enthusiasms have been mistaken; almost all human beliefs have been untrue. But there has been no untruth like that of the religious and political beliefs for which men have so persistently persecuted, tortured, and killed one another. In fact the best guarantee of the falsity of a belief would seem

to be the intensity with which it is embraced. It is a depressing thought! I fear, then, that the most that can be done for most people is to inculcate a little scepticism so that they will believe less; a little laziness so that they will act less; a little tolerance so that they will less resent the beliefs and actions of others.'

'And the war?' I persisted. 'You keep forgetting the war. I still want to know how your doctrines will help a world at war.'

'They will not help at all. They are not doctrines concocted for an emergency; they are truths for all time.'

'Then how do you personally propose to act in this war?'

'I have already said that I will do what I can to relieve suffering and distress wherever I find them.'

'And is that all?'

'Well, perhaps there is one thing more. It seems to me that it is desirable to form little nuclei of those who are prepared and anxious to follow a different way of life from that which obtains in this civilization; who will acknowledge different values, follow different courses, pursue different ideals, recognize different truths. In particular, they will be those who recognize the truth of the fundamental premiss which I have been throughout assuming and are prepared to order their lives in the light of their recognition. Negatively, they will seek to free themselves from the solicitations of desire and the promptings of ambition; positively, they will endeavour to overcome passions which separate the individual consciousness from the reality of which it is a partial expression, and by emptying themselves of the personal and the individual, to allow

themselves to be flooded with that reality. As I have said, there are certain techniques by means of which these results can be achieved, which are known in the East, and were practiced by the Christian mystics, though they have been largely forgotten by the modern West. These techniques can be most effectively practised by a group; there are, for example, group meditation and group recollection. The primary object of the members of the community would be, therefore, to live in such a way as to achieve both in groups and as individuals such an enlargement of consciousness as will enable them to make contact with reality. The ideal of the group would be to attain the peace and serenity which rewards realization of one's oneness with reality.

'Now, as to the war. It affords, I think, a good opportunity for the establishment of such communities. They would need to be largely independent, both of the economic and of the political system of society as a whole; and they must, therefore, be prepared to grow their own food, make some, at least, of their own machines, install their own power plant, and generate their own power. We don't want to forgo the use of the results of modern invention—the life of the peasant, with its brutalizing toil, is as far removed from the condition of the successful realization of reality as that of the typical citizen of an urban society—but we should use science as our servant, instead of being enslaved by it as our master. It seems to me to be not impossible that recruits may be found for these communities from among conscientious objectors now making their applications to tribunals. As you probably know, a man can often get exemption from mili-

tary service, provided that he is willing to take up some form of civil employment approved by the tribunal. Broadly speaking, the kind of civil employment that the tribunals are willing to sanction, and the only kind, is work in agriculture and in forestry. As the number of C.O.s grows, there will not be enough jobs in agriculture to go round, apart altogether from the fact that many farmers are for obvious reasons averse from employing them. There will, then, shortly be men who, unable to get work in categories approved by the tribunal, will because of their failure be allocated to non-combatant service in the army which, they feel, they cannot accept. It seems to me that it would be doing a real service to these harassed young men to lay out some money for the purpose of establishing a communal or collective farm on the Russian model, so that they might have somewhere to go where they would be assured of approved employment and of the society of their kind. These communities, originally purely agricultural in character, might later be strengthened by skilled technicians and engineers, and in due course might learn to become self-supporting. Here, then, would be little nuclei of people who, while they were practising a new kind of life, a life appropriate to a new form of civilization, would be gradually making themselves independent of the old one. Hence if the old one collapses, as I think it must, either quickly through war, or by a process of slow decay resulting from continual mistakes in living combined with increased leisure in which to multiply the mistakes, there will be in existence small bodies of people who will be able to escape the general breakdown and preserve what is valuable in the old culture.'

'Like the monasteries in the Dark Ages,' I said.

'Yes, like the monasteries in the Dark Ages; but not, of course, inheriting the monks' principles or practising the monks' austerities.'

'But suppose that our civilization neither collapses nor decays, but comes to rest in a "Brave New World"?'

'That won't alter the need for our communities. In some ways it will increase it. It is as necessary to keep alive the vision of the truth in a world where man has become an appendage of machines, as in one in which he has been reduced to the condition of a savage. Men may be brutalized in two ways; by the complete and continuous gratification of their tastes and by their starvation. The first is the condition of the inhabitants of "Brave New World"; the second of the citizens of a "Dark Age". However, the matters which we are now raising belong to a different discussion and I cannot here consider what would ultimately be the way of living within the communities I am imagining. Their immediate purpose, however, would be clear, to help those who are oppressed by a civilization at war, and it was for this reason that I introduced them as an example of one of the ways in which one would seek to relieve distress in war-time.'

I felt that the conversation had reached its close. I thanked E for talking to me so long and for conveying so much enlightenment by his talk, and with that I left him.

COMMENT

How to assess E? The answer to the question depended very largely upon whether one could accept either in whole or in part the metaphysical presupposi-

tions upon which his conclusions were based. For my part, I felt that I could not. I could contemplate them sympathetically in the abstract; I could regard them as plausible, perhaps even as probable; but I knew that I was as incapable of acting on them, incapable that is to say, of accepting the corollaries with regard to conduct that seemed inevitably to follow from their acceptance, as I was incapable of turning the other cheek, loving my enemies, and selling my goods and giving the proceeds to the poor. I was too far gone in what I had liked to think was a civilized Epicureanism, too corrupted by the climate of my age, too attached to my habits, too unregenerately comfort-living and desire-indulging to redirect my life along the paths to which E had pointed. But the fact that one was unable to follow where E led did not mean that his leadership was mistaken. E was, it was obvious, wholly sincere; he obviously tried to mould his life to fit the conclusions of his philosophy, and, judging by his behaviour, one would have said that he conspicuously succeeded. It was not merely that he was kind, unselfish, and compassionate. More to the point was an indefinable quality attaching to the man which attracted one's notice no less than it commanded one's respect. There was nobody of my acquaintance who made less claim upon one's attention; but equally, there was nobody whom it was so impossible to ignore.

But what concerned me at the moment was his attitude to the war. I had, I reflected, encountered considerable difficulty when I tackled him, and in spite of my cross-questioning his attitude had remained far from clear. He had not equivocated and he had concealed nothing, but I still did not know what, put-

ting it baldly, he thought about the war. Going once more through the notes of our conversation, I saw the reason for my difficulty. And the reason was that E had no attitude to the war as such, although he had a very definite attitude to the civilization of which the war was an expression. This civilization he condemned root and branch. Its members were, he held, living in an unreal world; they worshipped at the altars of false gods, acknowledged a false set of values, and followed illusory ends. Now those who live perpetually in a world of non-reality are doomed, he had argued, to frustration. The pleasures attendant upon the satisfaction of the appetites will prove will-o'-the-wisps which, the more actively pursued, will the more successfully elude their pursuers. These will, as a result, live bored, restless, and frustrated lives, nor will the false gods at whose shrines they worship enable them to exorcize their boredom and frustration. To acknowledge no value but pleasure, E had demonstrated, is to find that one's life is without value. He had then concluded that a life devoted to self-contradictory and frustrating pursuits will be a life of continual unrest. Of this unrest war is one, albeit an extreme expression. E, then, regarded war not as an evil in itself, but as a symptom of a more deep-seated evil, the evil of mistaken living.

Very elevated, I thought, and quite conceivably true. But was not the resultant attitude just a little too impeccably remote, just a shade too ineffably Olympian? And had one a right to maintain this Olympian aloofness when one's fellow creatures were suffering, even if one had established to one's own satisfaction that their sufferings were the necessary result of their wrongdoing?

Could one, in fact, contract spiritually out of one's society? It was a question that I had asked by the Amberley Wild Brooks and had answered for myself in the negative. But was E, then, answering it in the affirmative? Reflecting again upon what E had said, I saw that once again I had done him injustice. He had said that he made and would make it his business to relieve suffering wherever he found it. I had no reason to doubt any assertion that E made, but I felt that I had a right to suspend judgement until I had verified this one. I accordingly made inquiries. They resulted in the most triumphant verification. Apart from individual good deeds, planned with a forethought and timed with a precision which did as much credit to E's head as their motivation did to his heart, E had taken a hand in one of those outstanding pieces of undeniable good that Quakers and, it appears, only Quakers perform. To be precise, he had assisted in the reconstruction of Poland after the last war.

Poland after the last war was the sort of desert that only civilized man can make.

First the Germans, then the Cossacks had overrun the country; then again the Germans. As the Germans swept over the country for the second time, the Cossacks retired, systematically destroying every village, bridge, or farmhouse that might assist or shelter the invaders. The inhabitants they drove before them into the middle of Russia. In 1921 came the great famine in Russia, and the Polish peasants returned to find a land of utter desolation. Trenches and pillboxes, acres of barbed-wire entanglements, shell-holes full of water, and dumps of rusty metal consisting of shells and shell cases, abandoned lorries, shattered guns and dis-

mantled tanks studded the desolation. Not a building had been left standing. Such was the land to which the peasants returned accompanied by the inevitable typhus germ.

It was not long before the Quakers were on the scene and among them my friend E. Their relief work was, he told me, guided by two principles. The first was to give free medical assistance to all, to give free food to children, and to give free assistance to students, teachers, and professors who were unable at the time to make any repayment. Apart from these exceptions, whatever was given was given on the principle of loan rather than of gift. Thus the Quakers distributed cow cake and cotton-seed meal to the peasants, with the result that the cows began to give more milk. A proportion of the surplus milk was given back to the Quaker mission, who distributed it to children in the schools. The schools made a small contribution as payment for the extra milk, which was used to buy more cow cake and cotton-seed.

Again, the Quakers brought tractors into a land which had been denuded both of horses and ploughs. A group of Quaker engineers would arrive in a particular district complete with tractor, plough up several hundred acres, and then move on. The Quakers also gave seed. The villagers promised to set aside a certain proportion of the seed-corn from the following season's harvest to provide the nucleus for next autumn's sowing.

Flax and wool were purchased and distributed to the peasant women, who spun and wove them into cloth, which they then proceeded to embroider, employing, E told me, an exquisite, and hitherto unsus-

pected art of peasant embroidery. The Quakers sold the embroidered cloth in America and England and with the money purchased more flax and wool to be made into cloth. Presently, as the market for Polish embroidery grew, the Quakers were buying cloth and sending it to be embroidered direct. In this way a number of virtuous circles were started. Each little success was the begetter of others; each time the wheel was turned, it set in motion other wheels. The peasants were helped without being patronized, and the recipients of loans, instead of charity, retained their self-respect. E was engaged in this work for nearly two years. When he left, agriculture had been restarted, schools set up, hospitals established, and the ravages of typhus checked. Twenty years later, as a result of the German invasion of Poland, most of the work which had been done had, E reflected, been almost certainly destroyed.

'Well,' he said, 'there is only one thing to do. We must begin it again, when the war is over.'

No, assuredly, I thought, E cannot be censured on the ground of Olympian aloofness from human suffering. Here was no barren theorizer, content to censure the world for ignoring his theories; here was a man who acted as well as thought. But while most of the activities of our generation are devoted directly or indirectly to the work of destroying, E had devoted himself steadfastly to the work of preserving and creating. E and his like, I concluded, are the salt of the modern earth; before them the Houyhnhnms would retract and The Old Man of the Hill retire abashed; in them Shaw's Ancients would recognize something of their own selfless detachment.

Chapter X

APOLOGY FOR STALIN

★

I have a number of Communist friends and acquaintances, all of whom are talkative and well informed. F is, however, at once the clearest headed and the most convincing. I met and talked with F at a moment when the Party mind was in some confusion owing to the kaleidoscopic changes in the policy of the U.S.S.R. The number and disconcerting nature of these changes had made things very difficult indeed for members of the Communist Party of Great Britain. At the beginning of August they had been actively fomenting the Peace Bloc against aggression. 'Stand up' to Hitler, was their cry.

'The Communist Party', Mr. Pollitt had written in a pamphlet entitled *How to Win the War*, 'is convinced that the people of Britain are united as never before in their determination to win this war against Fascism and the friends of Fascism in Britain, and to end the horror and anxiety that have overshadowed Europe since Hitler came to power,' while in an official Manifesto the Party stated that it had 'never hidden and never will hide its detestation of Fascism and its readi-

ness to take part in any struggle, political or military, to secure the defeat of Fascism.'

Then came the Russo-German pact. For a time there was silence, while the pact was meditated. The result of the meditation was the announcement that this was a brilliant inspiration on the part of Stalin to strengthen the democratic front against Fascism and to circumscribe the area of possible war. Whatever happened now, Japan and Spain would be out of it; and how much stronger would England and France be because the Japanese and the Spanish *were* out of it; and how extremely clever of Stalin to have put them out of it without striking a blow. Then came the Soviet invasion of Poland followed by the Nazi-Soviet carve-up. Again the Party was in travail, from which it was presently delivered of another revelation. The real purpose of the invasion of Poland was, it appeared, to set limits to Nazi aggression. As a result of the Soviet's latest move, half of Poland had been 'liberated', while a line of Russian troops strung out along the Rumanian frontier effectively protected the Balkans and barred the Nazis' way to the south-east. Stalin, then, was doing what we had failed to do; he was stemming the tide of Nazi aggression and stemming it, moreover, without losing a single soldier.

Presently, it became apparent that Russo-German co-operation went far beyond an agreement to partition Poland, and that Russia was committed to the closest economic collaboration with Germany, including the supply of those very raw materials of which it was the object of our blockade to deprive the Nazis. It became apparent in fact that Hitler, having denounced the democracies for allying themselves with

the 'representatives of the most bloodthirsty tyranny that ever existed, Moscow-Bolshevism', had decided to follow suit; and in spite of having written: 'The effect of forming an alliance with Russia would be the signal for a new war. And the result of that war would be the end of Germany,' was now prepared to make precisely such an alliance. Meanwhile Stalin, who had constantly denounced the Fascists for their aggressive designs and posed in a white sheet before the world as the representative of the one non-aggressive power, was doing his best to assist the 'bloody assassins of the workers', while at the same time seizing the opportunity to demonstrate his antipathy to aggression by grabbing a large piece of territory which belonged to somebody else. A further period of gestation followed, at the end of which the Communist Party declared that Hitler's peace offer should be accepted, roundly abused Mr. Churchill, who had previously been praised for his belligerent speeches, and announced that the reactionary imperialists of Great Britain and France were sacrificing the toiling masses to the continuance of a totally unnecessary war. Meanwhile poor Mr. Pollitt, as heartily belligerent as any governing-class patriot fresh from Sandhurst or the Varsity, penned a public recantation of his former views acknowledging 'an impermissible infraction of our Party discipline', and Mr. J. R. Campbell admitted, also in public, that the original Party Manifesto had 'misled the Party as to the character of its task in this war'. On the day on which I met F, the alleged Communist author of a pamphlet *Peace at Once* had been arrested in France, while the Communist members of the Chamber of Deputies, by their insistence that Hitler's peace offer

should be considered and the war, if possible, called off, had driven the French legislature to deprive them of their seats as a preliminary to prosecuting them.

These were the circumstances in which I had the good fortune to meet F and obtain from her an explanation not only of the apparent inconsistencies of the Party, but of the policy of Russia, and the true objectives of the war. The invasion of Finland had yet to come, but, having read through my notes of my conversation with F, I cannot see that it would have caused her to modify her attitude or to vary the terms of her interpretation of events. Her withers, I feel, would have been completely unwrung. She would have swallowed Finland whole with the rest, and, having digested it, would have duly trotted out her demonstration of the Soviet's need to seize in advance vantage points for its defence against the coming onslaught of the combined capitalist powers, Great Britain, France, Germany, and Italy. And where would such vantage points naturally be found? Why, along the southern coast of Finland. With the Estonian coast to the south and the Finnish to the north in Russian hands, or under Russian protection, Leningrad need have little fear from the combined might of all the capitalist powers in the world.[1] Stalin, in fact, was merely setting a Finn to catch a whale.

F, whom I had first met as an Oxford undergraduate, was by any reckoning a remarkable young woman. Having grown up into a world which had little use for the services of educated and intelligent women, she had early made up her mind to forgo the privilege of

[1] Note added on going to press. I have just met F, and this (at great length) is precisely what she did say.

punctuating and turning into English the letters of illiterate business executives, making shorthand notes of the proceedings of learned committees, adding up the accounts of London stores, or submitting herself to any one of the various forms of intellectual drudgery with which society is accustomed to exploit the talents and fob off the aspirations of young women of her class and education. As a good Communist, she felt that, if she were ever to consent to work for capitalists under the capitalist system at capitalist jobs, she would require them to pay very handsomely for the privilege of employing her. If they refused, then she would do the work which she wanted to do, do it in her own way and see what she could get for it. The capitalists did refuse, so F resolving to undermine capitalism, as it were, from below, took a series of jobs in the basements of capitalist households; in other words, she became a kitchenmaid. In two years she had worked in the kitchens and sculleries of half a dozen large houses in the West End, varying the monotony with occasional spells as a waitress, a dish washer or a between-hand—the between-hand is somebody who takes dirty plates from the waitress, hands them in to the kitchen, and then hands back to the waitress the clean plates from the kitchen—in A.B.C. and Express Dairy shops. F persuaded herself that she had undertaken these jobs in the interests of social research. She was, she believed, obtaining material for a treatise on life below the kitchen stairs, which would exhibit to the scorn of all the treatment which capitalist society accords to its domestic workers. In order to substantiate this conception of herself, she had, indeed collected a great deal of valuable material. For my part, I was disposed

to regard this explanation as a rationalization imposed upon her by her Communist creed, which requires a rational explanation for everything—and to believe that she had been led to embark upon her below-stairs, post-Oxford career by nothing but a common or garden love of adventure. If so, her love had been amply satisfied.

I should have enjoyed passing on her accounts of grand and proud ladies and housekeepers even grander and prouder, were it not that it would take me beyond the confines even of the far-flung territories over which this book has sprawled and rambled. I should have enjoyed it, if only because I cannot help feeling that it is important that people should know for what, still more for whom, we are fighting. I particularly like the story of the teashop manageress who sacked F because of her accent. F, who had taken her vocation with immense seriousness, had gone out of her way to learn both Cockney and Manchester by preliminary periods of residence in the East End and in the Manchester slums; and when she was in her workaday uniform, complete with regulation lipstick and nail colouring, passing the time of day with a customer—she once did it all for my benefit in an Express Dairy shop—nobody could possibly have suspected the intellectual Oxford undergraduate. But though she could normally drop into Cockney and stay there without self-consciousness or strain for any length of time, in moments of excitement or emotion the linguistic mask was thrown aside and the native notes of what I suppose must be called her primeval Oxford accent broke through. One day she had a row with the manageress —I forget the cause—and both of them lost their tem-

pers. F immediately forgot her Cockney accent and dropped into her native Oxford, whereupon the manageress accused her of trying to imitate her, the manageress—who, F assured me, talked genteel Cockney—and sacked her for impertinence.

It will be seen that F is a young woman of remarkable strength of purpose. She is high-minded, determined, and dogmatic; she knows what she wants and having defined her objective, makes a bee-line towards it. Withal she is pretty and puritanical and, like many young Communists of my acquaintance, is inclined to relegate the whole business of sex to the background of her life until such time as she has leisure for it. At present she has no leisure for it. When the right man appears, she will marry him or, more probably, live with him on principle without marriage; but he must be a comrade and the marriage will be one of true ideologies rather than of true love. Meanwhile she is chaste as a nun—chastity is after all traditional in the neophytes of religious orders, and F is in keeping with tradition.

F is so different from most of the young women of my acquaintance that I have sometimes been tempted to wonder whether she and her kind are specimens of the new woman whose coming has been heralded so often during the last thirty years, but who has so lamentably failed to come. Ever since the days of the militant suffragettes, there have been these false feminist dawns, and two generations of women have now burst impulsively into a man-made world claiming equality and independence, only to subside ignominiously into the roles of wife, mother, and clerk.

But F and her kind—and I have met a number of

her kind at the universities—seem to be made of sterner stuff, and I doubt if marriage will tame her as easily as it has tamed her predecessors.

So much by way of preamble. Now for her views, which she administered to me clearly but firmly, as one might administer salutary medicine to a spoilt child. For to her, people like myself *are* spoilt, spoilt by having achieved a modicum of success by bourgeois standards in a bourgeois world, and having thereby acquired a vested interest in a society which she desires to abolish.

I will try to arrange in logical order the results of a number of conversations with F, beginning with the development of F's general point of view, proceeding to her account of the Russo-German pact, and concluding with her interpretation of the partition of Poland and the subsequent 'peace-offensive' by Hitler and Stalin.

'I am', F began, 'before everything, a socialist. I think that capitalism is a grossly inequitable system which makes for human unhappiness and which ought to be superseded. I think further that it will be superseded. Given the existing technique of production and the economic background of society resulting from that technique, the capitalist system cannot continue any longer to function without successive economic crises, each more severe than the last, resulting in slumps, unemployment, and an intensified competition for markets which makes war between the competing nations sooner or later inevitable.

'My reasons for this view are such as can be found in the writings of Marx and Lenin. Briefly, they are that the increase of productive capacity due to machin-

ery forces capitalism to face a problem which grows ever more acute, the problem, namely, of disposing of its products. It cannot dispose of these in the home market, since it is in the nature of capitalism to pay its workers a subsistence wage, or a wage which rises only very slightly above subsistence level. Consequently capitalists are driven to embark upon a quest for overseas markets and find themselves involved in a struggle growing ever more intense to obtain command of such markets as may remain unexploited. In order to back its nationals in this struggle, each capitalist State pursues an aggressive foreign policy which it must be prepared in the last resort to sustain by force of arms. This is the root cause of modern imperialism, of the aggressive foreign policies of modern States, and of the armaments race. Aggressive foreign policies backed by great and growing armaments lead sooner or later to war. War, therefore, between capitalist States is under modern conditions inevitable.

'Once such a war comes, it must be the object of all socialists to use it as a means of preparing the way for revolution. This is the aim of the Soviet Government, an aim plainly and frequently expressed. Take, for example, the following resolution passed in February 1935 by the Communist Political Bureau after a speech by Stalin. "The Political Bureau is definitely convinced that a new world war is absolutely inevitable, but explains this as the obvious preparation for the world revolution. With the aim of self-preservation, and in the interests of the world revolutionary movement, the Soviet Government must do all possible to enter the camp of the States which build the strongest coalition." If you will bear this declaration in mind,

you will, I hope, find many of the moves in Soviet foreign policy that now perplex you rather more intelligible.

'I must mention one other matter to complete this sketch of the background. Apart altogether from its difficulties abroad, capitalism having passed its prime has found itself in recent years in great and ever growing difficulties at home. In order to maintain its position in the face of these difficulties, it has been forced to destroy the forms of social democracy. It has suppressed workers' movements and abolished the political liberties which were conceded through parliamentary institutions by the liberalism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This necessity which capitalism is under to destroy political liberty is the root cause of Fascism, which is capitalism's last ditch. It is only by forcible revolt on the part of the workers that capitalism can be superseded, and Fascism is the method by which the capitalists arm themselves in advance against such revolt.'

I suggested that there was at least the possibility that capitalism might be gradually transformed into socialism without a revolutionary break. I suggested further that this process of transformation had in fact been taking place in our own country during the last twenty-five years. The position of the working classes, I pointed out, had substantially and progressively improved. They had obtained an ever larger share of the nation's income, and the inequalities of wealth were being gradually ironed out by a steeply graded income-tax, by estate duties, death duties, and a number of other devices whereby the State relieved its richer citizens of their surplus goods for the benefit of its poorer.

F showed some impatience at this suggestion. 'I agree', she said, 'that the workers are slightly better off than they were a hundred years ago, but it is not true to say that there has been any redistribution of wealth. Relatively to the wealth of the country as a whole, the workers are worse off.'

I expressed surprise and incredulity.

'Just wait a moment', she said, 'and I will let you have some figures that will surprise you.' She had brought a dispatch-case crammed with books and papers. She fumbled in it and fished out a volume. 'Here', she said, 'is a book called *The Socialist Case* by Douglas Jay. It gives figures showing that 80 per cent of the capital of this country is owned by 6 per cent of the population; that 17,600,000 out of every 20,000,000 persons who receive income in Great Britain, in other words, about nine wage earners out of every ten, draw less than £250 per annum, and that 12,000,000 of these 17,600,000 persons receive an income barely above subsistence level, with the result that nearly half the people in the country are undernourished.'

'But', I said, 'you cannot trust the arguments of an avowed socialist which are designed to support an avowedly socialist case.'

'Can't you?' she said. 'Well, if you won't have Douglas Jay, listen to Sir John Orr. Here are some figures from his *Food, Health, and Income*, which was published in 1936. 22,500,000 persons in England and Wales were then living on a diet which is below the minimum standard for health laid down by the British Medical Council; 4,500,000 were living on a weekly income of ten shillings per head, of which only four shillings was

spent on food. In the circumstances you won't be surprised to learn that while fifty-seven out of every thousand boys born in the country as a whole die in the first year of life, in Durham and Northumberland ninety-seven out of every thousand die in the first year of life.

'Now as to your contention that the position of the working classes is slowly and steadily improving. In a sense it is true, but it is true not because the working classes are getting a larger share of the national income—in point of fact they are not—but because, the country as a whole being richer, the working classes actually receive more than they did a hundred years ago, actually, though not proportionately. In this country, broadly speaking, there are 43,000,000 persons who may be described as non-capitalists and 4,000,000 who may be described as capitalists. This 4,000,000 includes the 850,000 who receive incomes of more than £500 a year and their families. Now if you will look up Sir Walter Layton's and Mr. Crowther's book, *An Introduction to the Study of Prices*, you will find that the 43 million's *share* of the national income, which was 50 per cent in 1860, was only 45 per cent in 1901. Mr. Colin Clark computes that in 1911 it was 39·5 per cent; in 1924 42·1 per cent, and in 1935 40·5 per cent. Now I am going to read you a passage from John Strachey's pamphlet, *Why You Should be a Socialist*, in which he comments on the meaning of these figures.

' "There is no tendency even to redistribution here. What has happened is that the whole historic struggle of the British workers has just about enabled them to hold their ground against the terrific bias of the system towards keeping the wage-workers on the sub-

sistence level and putting the whole of the ever-growing surplus into the hands of the owners of the means of production. It has taken super-tax, and the social services by which this money has been distributed to the workers, to enable the workers to maintain their share in the national income."

'My reason for dragging you through all these figures is to try to convince you that there has not as yet been any real advance towards Socialism. Nor will there be, short of revolution, since the capitalists will never surrender their privileged position without a struggle, which means that the policy of gradualism to which the Labour parties of the Western democracies are pledged can never bring us Socialism.

'That is why I regard Russia, the one country where Socialism has been actually established, as the only hope in the world to-day; that is why it is the effect of this war upon Russia rather than upon England that concerns me, and that is why the object of all the moves and turns in the Party's policy which so bewilder you is always one and the same object, which is at all costs to preserve and increase the power of Soviet Russia. Now you will, of course, appreciate that, as the situation changes, the policies which are best calculated to promote that end also change. If you do appreciate this, then you will find little difficulty in conceding that the fact that the policy of the Communist Party goes through a number of transformations does not mean that the end has been transformed. The end, I repeat, is always the same, the preservation of Socialism in Russia and, I should add, its extension to other countries.

'What is true of the policy of the Communist Party

of Great Britain is true of the policy of Soviet Russia. The fact that the Soviet makes a pact with Nazi Germany doesn't, of course, mean that Stalin has suddenly discovered a sympathy with Fascism. It means merely that, granted the rules of the game of power politics, as played by the capitalist States of contemporary Europe, Stalin sees in such a pact the best method of preserving the power of Soviet Russia in the present and extending the power of Soviet Russia in the future.'

'So far,' I said, 'given your premisses, it is all fairly plain sailing. But you haven't yet come to the difficulties,' and I went on to ask not only for an explanation of the policy which culminated in the Russo-German pact, but of the apparent treachery involved in first negotiating with British statesmen and leading them to suppose that the Soviet would form part of a Peace Bloc against Germany, and then making an alliance with Germany behind their backs. 'It is Stalin's double-crossing in this matter which', I insisted, 'has really "got people's goat" in this country'.

'But Stalin', said F, '*did* want a Peace Bloc. He wanted, in other words, to create a solid united front against Nazi aggression. Nazi Germany must, it was obvious, expand or burst. If a sufficiently strong alliance of peaceful powers could have been built up, Nazi Germany would have been unable to expand, and as a consequence she would have burst; that is to say, economic discontent would have produced a Communist revolution. Hence Russia's first and best policy was to work for an internal explosion; her obvious endeavour was to undermine Fascism in Germany through the bottling-up effects of her alliance with

France and Britain. As the negotiations proceeded, however, it became apparent that the last thing that Britain and France wanted was an "all-in" alliance with Soviet Russia. What they did want was a *one-sided* alliance. If they were attacked by Germany, Russia was to come to their assistance; but if Russia were attacked, they would not guarantee their assistance to Russia. (You remember, no doubt, our refusal to guarantee the Baltic States through which a Nazi attack on Russia would most probably have come).

'Now the most likely effect of this one-sided alliance would have been to direct Nazi aggression upon Russia. If the Nazis went west they would find themselves opposed by Britain and France, with a hostile Russia in their rear; if east, opposed by a hostile Russia but with a neutral or friendly Britain and France in their rear. I say "friendly" because of my conviction that what Mr. Chamberlain has wanted all along has been to turn Hitler eastward, not only because such a course would have headed him away from the British Empire, *but because it would have headed him on to Soviet, that is to say Socialist, Russia.* The best thing of all, in the estimation of the British governing class, would have been to engineer a conflict between Germany and Russia. Such a conflict would have killed two birds with one stone; it would have kept Hitler busy and it would have weakened, perhaps destroyed, Socialism, the hated thing, in Russia.

'When Hitler showed a tendency to turn not eastwards but westwards, the British governing class, now thoroughly alarmed, wanted to make sure of the assistance of Russia to help them withstand the shock of a Nazi onslaught. It was with these considerations in

mind that they began to negotiate for a pact. It sounds rather involved, but let me recapitulate: what the British were not in any circumstances prepared to do was to promise to assist Russia, if Hitler went eastwards. And this for two reasons: first, they did not on general grounds want an alliance with a socialist country. Why *should* capitalist Britain want to bolster up Communist Russia? Secondly, if an "all-in" alliance *had* been formed, it would have been strong enough to prevent Nazi aggression anywhere, and Hitler would have been bottled up inside Germany. If you bottle up the Nazi régime inside its own borders, then, as I have already said, it will burst, and a Communist régime will in all probability arise from the debris. Now a Communist régime in Germany as well as in Russia was the last thing the British governing class wanted. You see, then, that there were three possible choices for our governing class. The first and best alternative was a war between Germany and Russia with ourselves standing out; the next best was the assurance of Russian help, in case of German aggression against the west; the third, and worst, was to be compelled to go to Russia's assistance, if Germany moved eastwards, since it would have entailed using our forces to prevent German aggression against Russia. But German aggression against Russia was the very thing that our governing class wanted. It would have given Hitler room in which to expand; it would have diverted him from the British Empire; and it would have weakened, perhaps destroyed, Communism. I hope you now see why it was that we were never really serious about the Russian pact, except on condition that it should be formed on our own terms?'

I demurred. It had seemed to me that during the summer months there had been an almost universal desire for the Russian pact. People clung to the hope of it as the one way of preventing the war, or at least of winning it, if it could not be prevented.

'The people, I grant you, wanted the pact. Why shouldn't they. *They* had no fear of Russia precisely because *they* had no fear of losing their positions and privileges as the result of an alliance with a Socialist State. But the position of the Government was different. The British governing class had, it is true, been forced to contemplate an alliance with Russia, but only as the very worst of *pis-allers*, and even then, as I have already explained, they were prepared to contemplate it only as a one-way affair. Russia was to help us, but we were not to help Russia. You must remember that, ever since the Nazi Revolution, our ruling class has been placed in an exceedingly difficult dilemma: they have been between the devil and the deep sea, the devil being German ambitions, the deep sea Russian principles. German ambitions threaten their empire; Russian principles their incomes. What, in the circumstances, was a patriotic plutocrat to do? Obviously to try to set Germany and Russia at one another's throats and so to head them both off his empire, his income, and his privileges. That is why he has never really abandoned the project of a four-power pact against Russia. Even now there are large numbers of the British governing class who still cherish a secret hope of a holy war against Communism. It was only last year that Lord Londonderry was saying: "I was at a loss to understand why we could not make common ground in some form or other with Germany in opposition to

Communism." We were prepared, that is to say, only a few years ago to fight with Germany against Russia, just as we were prepared if attacked, to appeal to Russia to fight with us against Germany. What we were not prepared to do was to fight against both Germany and Russia. Thus our policy throughout has been to embroil these two countries with one another, while at the same time assuring ourselves of the support of either should we be attacked by the other. But in no circumstances would we assist either if it were attacked by the other. Why, indeed, should we?

'I do hope you can now see the answer to the question, why it was that we never seriously contemplated an "all-in" alliance with the Soviet? You will remember that we were so little serious that we didn't even send a minister to negotiate; not even Anthony Eden, whose success on his former visit in keeping his Old School Tie prepossessions sufficiently in check to enable him to refrain from either openly patronizing or obviously disdaining Stalin and Litvinoff, marked him out as the obvious man for the job. Instead, we sent a Foreign Office official. Compare our method of doing business with that of the Germans, who, when their chance came, snapped it up, sent their Foreign Minister to Moscow, and had the whole thing settled in a week. All of which shows plainly enough that the Germans meant business and that we didn't.'

'All this may be as it may be,' I said. 'But it is pure conjecture. What sticks in most people's throats here is not that the Russians should have failed to make a pact with us in spite of their repeated declarations on the need for forming a united front against Nazi aggression, but that, when we had shown them that we meant

business by our guarantee of Poland, they should have gone over to the aggressor and actually helped themselves to a large slice of Polish territory. For years past the Russians have stood in a white sheet before the world as the one non-aggressive power in Europe; yet when it came to the point, they were ready to aggress with the best of them, and to betray their friends into the bargain.'

'As long as you persist in judging the situation from the hopelessly parochial standpoint of the effect of whatever happens upon Britain and France, you will never understand Russian policy. The unspoken assumption running through everything you say is that the sole duty, the only permissible function for the Russians—what, in fact, they are here for and all they are here for—is to help us. This assumption determines your attitude to Russian policy. Does it benefit us? Does it injure or threaten us? Then it is a bad policy. Does it assist us? Then it is a good one. But why, pray, should Russia flatter our susceptibilities or further our interests? For twenty years we have alternated between cold-shouldering and blackguarding Russia. In the hope of destroying Communism at the end of the last war we financed a number of disreputable adventurers, Denikin and Wrangel and the rest, and sent them to invade Russian territory. When we could no longer delude ourselves with the hope that the Communist Government could be overthrown, we sent it to Coventry. "Not shaking hands with murder", I believe was the phrase that we used to justify our ostracism of 150 million people at the very moment when we were letting loose the Black-and-Tans to murder the Irish. For years we refused to permit Rus-

sia to enter the League. When at last she did become a member and promptly proposed disarmament, we treated her as if she were a naughty schoolboy making a bad joke. For years after that, one of the most deeply cherished objectives of the British Government has been, as I have already explained, to form a four-Power alliance against Russia. When, at the time of the Czech affair, the Russians stood firmly by their pledges, and said so, we protested that we could not trust their word and gave our distrust as an excuse for breaking ours. When, after Hitler had marched into Prague last March, the Russians invited us to join with them in forming a bloc of peaceful powers to resist aggression, we said that the proposal was premature. Only at the very last moment, when all other resources had failed us, did we condescend to treat the Russians as human beings and solicit their alliance. Why, then, I ask you again, in the light of the history of the last twenty years, should the Russians love us?

'No doubt they loathe the Nazis, but I doubt if they loathe imperialism much less. England and France are the two biggest imperialist countries in the world. With a joint population of under 90 millions they rule nearly 600 millions of the inhabitants of this planet (England alone rules 480 millions). And how do we rule them? Consider our record as an imperialist power in the past; remember Denshawi and the Boer War and Amritsar and the Black-and-Tans. Nor have we changed our spots; we are still the great imperialist power. England still oppresses and refuses freedom to the people of India; England still exploits the labour of black and brown and yellow peoples all over the world in order to increase the wealth of her governing classes; England

is still the greatest bulwark of capitalism in the world. Of course, Russia is no friend of ours, and it is only a mind blinded by parochial patriotism that sees in her refusal to bolster up British Imperialism a condonation of aggression, a tolerance of Fascism, or a desire for territory similar to that which we so much admire in ourselves.

'But because Russia does not propose to perpetuate capitalism in Britain by helping the British governing class to win another victory, it doesn't in the least follow that she proposes to win a victory for Fascist Germany. Of course, when the moment came, she stepped into Poland. What could be more obvious? She set a limit to Nazi aggression, secured her own frontiers, freed the Ukrainians and the White Russians, who had been shamefully oppressed by the Poles, and won a new area for Socialism. You will have noticed, by the way, that the Russians didn't fight the Polish people; they contented themselves with shooting a few landlords and bureaucrats, breaking up some big estates and giving the land to the peasants. Well, what else would you expect a socialist State to do, and can you as a socialist—or should I say, as an ex-socialist—deplore the spread of socialist doctrine and the extension of the area in which Socialism holds sway?'

'I agree', I said, 'that, as you put it, it sounds logical enough, and, given that Socialism not only in Russia but throughout Europe is the one objective that matters, logical no doubt it is. But isn't it a little steep, to say the least of it, to ally oneself with Fascism? Isn't it even a little treacherous, to attack the Poles in the rear at the very moment when they are defending themselves against the Fascist aggressor in front? And isn't

it a little predatory, to exploit another country's misfortunes in order to grab its territory? Do you remember', I asked—and here I took down the volume of *Gulliver's Travels*, whose author's view of human nature had originally provoked me to pursue the quest upon which I was engaged—'the passage in which Gulliver, who is explaining to his Houyhnhnm master how wars happen, ironically includes among the justifiable causes of declaring war against a country, the weakness of that country. "Sometimes" ,' I read, ' "one Prince quarrelleth with another, for fear the other should quarrel with him. Sometimes a war is entered upon because the Enemy is too *strong*, and sometimes because he is too *weak*. . . . It is a very justifiable Cause of War to invade a Country after the People have been wasted by Famines, destroyed by Pestilence or embroiled by Faction among themselves." Doesn't the Russian invasion of Poland', I concluded, 'look just a little like that? Doesn't it also look like an example of the aggressive militarism which you so deplore in others? For the object of aggressive militarism is, I take it, to maximize the area of country that one governs and to maximize the number of subjects over whom one's government is exercised; and this the aggressive militarist seeks to do for no other reason than that wide territories and many subjects increase the power and enhance the glory of the country to which he belongs. The Russian Government, in other words, being not immune from the motives which have influenced all other governments, desires to be powerful and glorious; therefore, as a first step, it sets about the recovery of the territory which was lost in 1918. Now I put it to you, isn't it, after all, just as simple as that? Doesn't it, after all,

look just like that? And why, pray, in spite of these very plain and obvious pointers from the evidence which shows them to be the same, am I to suppose that Russian motives are, as you would have me believe, totally unlike those which have animated every other government that the world has known? That, in other words, the desire of Russia's rulers is not to increase Russia's power, but to spread Socialism because Socialism will benefit mankind? Not to grab territory and to multiply subjects because territory and subjects will enhance the power of Russia, but to free the proletariat of eastern Poland from the oppression of bourgeois capitalism because of their adherence to a political philosophy and an economic doctrine?'

'On the general question: "Are Russian motives really different from those of the governments of other nations?" I cannot answer you; at least, not yet. How can one after all prove anything in regard to motives? But let me take up your earlier points and, when I have disposed of them, come back to your later. What, you ask, is the reason for Russia's apparent alliance with Germany and occupation of Poland? The reason for the occupation of Poland is simple. Russia, as I have already explained, wanted to save at least part of Poland from the Nazis. But why, then, you ask, ally oneself with the aggressor? As I see it, there are two reasons. First, Russia wants gradually to transform the Nazi régime into a Communist régime. As has been pointed out by Herr Rauschnigg in his book, *Germany's Revolution of Destruction*, there is much less difference economically between the German and Russian systems than there is between either of them and an old-fashioned Liberal capitalism such as obtains here.

Again, both régimes are strictly revolutionary. It is no wonder, then, that the coming together of Germany and Russia should have been prophesied for years by observers who were not blinded by their parochialism to what was really happening in Europe; and that when they had come together, the whole world situation should be revolutionized. As Rauschnigg puts it, we are seeing "the confluence of two streams which run into the same sea, the sea of world revolution. Germany and Russia," he goes on, "if they come together will radically transform the world." Rauschnigg is, of course, right.

'While asserting that the modern world will be transformed, Rauschnigg doesn't say what kind of transformation there is likely to be; but it is already fairly clear which way the wind is blowing. In Germany there has already been a decided move to the Left. It is not merely that, following upon the Russian pact, large numbers of Communists have been let out of concentration camps just as they have been put into them in France; that Thaelmann has been set at liberty, that denunciations of Russia have ceased; more important is the fact that the whole German economy has taken a Leftward turn. The already stringent regulation of capital has been still further tightened up. A capitalist in Germany can no longer call his pocket, let alone his soul, his own. Of the right to buy cheap and sell dear, the right to manufacture what commodities one pleases, the right to make what profit one can out of the labour of others and to do with one's profit what one will, when one has made it—of all these rights the German capitalist has been dispossessed. So rapid, indeed, is this movement to the Left that I am afraid

it may be stopped or at least diverted before the transformation is complete.'

'How diverted?' I asked.

'By the removal of Hitler. The Right in Germany is already thoroughly alarmed. I suppose you saw that, only a few weeks ago, Thyssen made a getaway while the going was good; if, of course, he was not actually exiled. The Right hates this *rapprochement* with Russia, just as our capitalists would have hated it. Its adherents bitterly resent the curtailment of profits and the State regulation of industry. They see more regulation coming and know only too well that, by the end of the war, they will be ruined, even if they have not been swept aside by a Communist revolution; and so, inevitably, they are against the war, against Hitler who is keeping the war going, against the alliance with Russia which helps him to keep it going. All our reports go to show that the landlords and the industrialists are seething with discontent, and our fear is that they will bump Hitler off, or at any rate supersede him and put Goering in his place, before the movement goes much farther. The work is going on admirably, but it is not finished yet.'

'What is this work', I asked, 'that is not finished yet?'

'The preparation of Germany for Communist revolution. For that, of course, is the real objective of Russian policy; and it is in order to realize this objective that the war must be kept going for some time yet.'

'But why', I asked, 'is Germany singled out for the delights of revolution? What about England and France? If the way to produce a revolution is to ally oneself with the country marked down for revolt, and if revolution on Communist lines is universally and

always desirable, why not an alliance with England and France?'

'Well, one cannot be allied at the same time with both sides in a war.'

'What, not even Stalin?'

The question came from A, who had just entered the library, where F and I were sitting over tea, in time to hear the last sentence.

'I had always been led to believe that to Stalin all things were possible,' he went on, 'and that such trifles as double-crossing your friends and allying yourself to your enemies as a preliminary to stabbing friend or enemy in the back, as opportunity offers, were all in the day's work.'

F laughed at him. 'You can't be a Communist these days without achieving considerable proficiency in resisting the innumerable temptations to "rise" that are placed in your way. I hope I am pretty immune by now and I am certainly not going to be drawn by that sort of thing at my time of life.' (F, I should have added, is twenty-two.) 'As a matter of fact though, you are not so very far wrong. I was just about to explain to Joad that it is not only in Germany that Stalin wants a revolution; he wants it wherever he can get it, and that is why the war must go on. So the first plank in Russian policy—please get it clearly into your head'—(she addressed this exhortation more particularly to A)—'is that Russia wants the war to go on; to go on, you must understand, for the benefit of England and France no less than for that of Germany. That is what *Izvestia* meant by the statement in yesterday's leader that has puzzled so many people who cannot look beyond the end of their parochial, political noses: "To fight and

crush Hitlerism would be criminal and political folly." '

'Why, then,' asked A, 'if he wants the war to go on, does Stalin go out of his way to associate himself with German peace offers?'

'Don't let Hitler's peace offers take you in. There isn't the slightest chance of peace now; and Stalin knows it, and knows it partly because he has taken good care to guard against it. You remember those long conversations that Ribbentrop had with Molotoff just before Hitler made his first peace offer? What do you think they were about? Poland? But the partition of Poland had already been settled. The Balkans? But Stalin had already barred the road to the Balkans. The Baltic? But respective spheres of influence had already been delimited. No, they were about the continuance of the war. Hitler, as I surmise, really wanted to make peace, at any rate for the time being, and was thinking of putting forward an offer that the Allies would have had to take seriously. Hitler, you see, is really worried about the effects of the blockade on the German people; worried, lest they should refuse to stand indefinitely for the continuance of a war which involves such severe and continuous hardship.

'So Molotoff in effect bribes Hitler to continue the war with a promise of substantial economic help. All the goods in the Russian larder are to be made available for Germany, provided that the Nazis will continue the war; will, that is to say, offer peace terms which there is not the slightest chance of the Allies accepting. I suspect that another clause in the agreement, that is to say, another condition of help, was that German internal policy should move increasingly

Leftwards, that Communist prisoners should be released, profits further curtailed, freedom of enterprise restricted, and so on. All this, of course, is pure speculation, but we shall very soon see whether I am right. If I am, one of two things will happen: either, as I have said, the Right, alarmed by the Leftward trend of Hitler's policy and hating the alliance with Russia, will get rid of him; or, as I hope and think more likely, Hitler himself will take the initiative and purge the Right before they get troublesome. Hitler, as you may remember, is rather good at taking the initiative in purging. In the first event, we shall probably receive a serious offer of peace; in the latter, the war will go on, with generous Russian help on the economic, food, and raw material fronts, to enable it to go on.'

'But', objected A, 'Russia can't help Germany with food; at least she can't help much. She has no surplus for her own people.'

'On the assumption of an ordinary trade agreement,' said F, 'I grant you that she can't. But suppose that the two countries pool their resources, blend their economic systems, become, in fact, a single economic block. Then all the predictions relative to Germany's inability to buy Russian commodities, and Russia's lack of surplus commodities to sell, will be falsified. Russian raw material developed by German technical skill will be sufficient to keep Germany supplied with essential commodities for years, which means, of course, that the war will continue for years. At the same time, the close co-operation between the peoples of the two countries and, more particularly, the drafting of large numbers of German workers into Russia will lead to fraternization, and fraternization in its

turn to ideological permeation. In other words, the ground will be prepared for a revolution in Germany. Perhaps not only in Germany, but in Britain and France too.'

'You are a ruthless young woman and no mistake,' said A. 'You first propose a three or four years war; cheerfully top it off with a revolution in all the belligerent countries, and then grin at us triumphantly like a child expecting a reward for doing a trick. Aren't you appalled, young woman, at the thought of the misery and suffering to which you are proposing to commit the world? After three or four years of war against the Germans we are apparently to have a civil war amongst ourselves. In other words, we are to have the Great War of 1914–18 and then the Spanish war on top of it. And all this is to happen when we could have had peace because, apparently, all that devil Stalin cares about is world revolution.'

'It is not I, it is not even Stalin who is demanding that the war should be prolonged; it will be prolonged by the logic of events. The structure of capitalism is cracking because its foundation in the technique of production has changed and requires a different structure. Capitalism, in other words, is, to-day, like a building without a foundation. But before it finally collapses and a new phase of world history is inaugurated, a whole epoch of war and revolution is, I believe, destined to intervene. This was the teaching of Lenin and events seem to be showing that Lenin was, as usual, right. Let me apply Lenin's teaching to the present situation.

'When you reproach the Communist Government for preventing Hitler from making peace, or rather,

from offering peace terms that stand a chance of acceptance, your reproach is based upon the assumption that a genuine peace offer from Nazi Germany *is* possible. This assumption is mistaken. Hitler, as I have already said, must expand or burst, the alternatives being forced upon him by the internal economic situation in Germany. If he makes peace and disarms, not only will he have millions of unemployed on his hands, but German industry, deprived of a market for its goods—for it is only the stimulus to consumers' demand imparted by rearmament that has enabled German industry to maintain itself all these years—will go bankrupt. To put it in a nutshell, German industry must have either war or new markets, in order to maintain itself. German industrialists, therefore, simply cannot allow Hitler to make a peace which is a real peace, since a real peace would deprive them of their markets and, therefore, of their profits. If a patched-up peace is concluded, Hitler's need for markets will drive him to use the breathing space which it gives him as an opportunity for further aggression; and further aggression will sooner or later mean war with the imperialist powers who are already in possession. It is because he knows that there can be no real peace while Nazism remains in power in Germany that Stalin's determination to keep the war going, which seems to you so shocking, reveals itself on analysis only as a necessary deduction from a realistic apprehension of the facts of the situation. And the facts are that with capitalism in its present phase of decline, there cannot be real or lasting peace in the world because of the ever-increasing intensity of the capitalists' struggle for ever-shrinking markets. And so I come back to the

Marxist diagnosis from which I started, a diagnosis which exhibits the war as the necessary outcome of the fundamental contradictions of a capitalist civilization which has outgrown its usefulness. I hope that I have succeeded in showing that Stalin's policy is a necessary deduction from the same fundamental premises.

'Granted these premises, granted that there must be war, and granted that one is oneself a Socialist, then surely one is not only justified in using, one has a positive duty to try to use for some constructive end the situation which has arisen. Loss and suffering beyond measure there must in any event be; unless Communism takes charge, the loss and suffering will be both pointless and endless, as the strains and stresses of a decaying capitalism breed war after war, until our civilization degenerates into gangs of half-starved savages quarrelling and gibbering over the last turnip. Communism seeks to control this situation and to use it for the establishment of a socialist society, which is the only form of political organization in harmony with the modern technique of production, which is the only form of political organization, therefore, that offers a chance of stability and lasting peace. These, then, are the alternatives, war succeeding war, without purpose or direction, till civilization reverts to barbarism; or the planning and directing of this and, it may be, of subsequent wars so that, from the ruin and loss which they entail, there may emerge the beginnings of a better and juster order of society. The world to-day is in travail with the socialist State, and wars are but the pangs that attend its birth. Let us hope that it may be safely delivered.'

I had meant at this point to bring this Russian inter-

lude, which has already unconscionably prolonged itself, to an end, but the outburst which the conclusion of F's lengthy exposition produced in A was so characteristic, that I cannot deny myself the pleasure of recording it.

'I cannot help agreeing', he said, 'with a good deal of what you say. I agree that Stalin wants to stop Nazi aggression in the east; I agree that he doesn't want the Nazis in the Balkans; I agree that his co-operation with the Germans is, nevertheless, very close and may become closer, and I agree that he probably wants a long war. I agree, too, about his motive for wanting a long war. He wants to bleed us all white in order to take advantage of our weakness to bring about internal revolution. It is wholly characteristic of Stalin, first to heap abuse on the wretched Trotsky because he advocated a policy of world revolution—as if to differ from holy Stalin on a matter of policy were a crime—and then to adopt the very policy which he has exiled Trotsky for advocating. Trotsky having been effectively disposed of, the despised policy of the Third International is taken out of cold storage and presented to the world as a brand-new plan for using war as a means of making the world safe for Communist revolution. It is just like Stalin to palm off the results of somebody else's thinking as his own.

'But it is in regard to the object of the whole business that you go so hopelessly wrong. Your mistake is to assume that Stalin wants revolution in order to benefit the toiling masses. Fiddlesticks! He wants revolution, if he wants it at all, because he wants power, and his only use for the toiling masses is as a lever to obtain power. Russia hates the democracies even more than

she hates Germany, because they stand in the way of her plan for world revolution, and she hates Great Britain most of all, because ours is the happiest and most contented democracy in Europe, and, therefore, the greatest obstacle to her designs. Because our own working classes are contented, Stalin knows he can do nothing with them, except perhaps after years of war and of the misery that war brings; therefore, Stalin wants war. If contentment were to spread, Communism would die. Therefore he doesn't like contentment. I have no difficulty in seeing why he wants a victory for the Allies even less than he wants a victory for Germany. He is like a vulture waiting until the fight is over that he may pick the bones of better men than himself, slain by better men than himself. Oh, yes, Stalin's motives are clear enough. The only thing that beats me is how you can bring yourself to admire them.'

'I admire them', said F, 'because I want justice for the millions of poor and portionless people whom capitalist civilization oppresses.'

'How can you let yourself be taken in by that stuff at this time of day?' said A. 'It is power that Stalin wants, not justice for oppressed millions, and whether he gets it with or without a revolution is, I imagine, for him a matter of comparative indifference. So put all this ideological stuff out of your head. It may have had some bearing on the situation once; it has none now. On the whole, I should say that Stalin would prefer to get his way without revolution, which means that he would prefer to get it through war. The Russian revolution, it has long been obvious, is going the way of the French, and is now entering upon its Napoleonic phase. Russia, in fact, has become an imperialist

power. Look at the mopping up of the Baltic States, the demand for the Aaland islands, the threat to Finland.[1] In no sense whatever is modern Russia now an exporter of revolution; in fact I should say that nobody wants a revolution in Germany on old-fashioned Communist lines less than Stalin. Which is another reason why your diagnosis is all wrong.'

F shrugged her shoulders. 'It is no sort of use arguing any more,' she said, as she got up to go. 'I must go my way and think my thoughts, you yours. And there it is, and there we must leave it.'

COMMENT

I could, I thought, scarcely give F fewer marks for sincerity than I had given A himself. She was, it was obvious, 100 per cent sincere; nor could I in fairness rate her as less intelligent. Her arguments, badly and baldly as I have presented them, were highly ingenious and formed a reasonably consistent whole. Moreover, she was, I felt, as nearly disinterested as is possible for human beings. She desired the triumph of Socialism because she believed that mankind as a whole would benefit therefrom, and to this single, dominating purpose she was cheerfully prepared to subordinate everything else. No backing, so far, for what I have called the Fielding-Shaw-Swift view of human nature! Yet while so much was admirable, there was, I could not help thinking, something amiss. What was it?

As I pondered the question, a quotation came into my mind. 'I beseech you, gentlemen, in the bowels of

[1] The subsequent invasion of Finland has confirmed A's diagnosis, though, as I anticipated (see page 194), it has left F's withers completely unwrung.

Christ, to conceive it possible that you are mistaken.' The words are those of Oliver Cromwell, engaged in admonishing the Irish bishops. The trouble with F, I thought, was precisely her assurance of not being mistaken. She had a vast amount of information at her finger-tips, but not, I felt, enough to justify the tremendous hypothesis in which she believed, and in the light of which she was prepared to interpret every twist and turn of the changing situation; and when her information failed, she was too ready to supply the place of knowledge by converting her conjectures into dogmas. She would prolong the war for an indefinite period and when the nations were too exhausted to continue it, she would plunge them into civil war. One's mind staggered back appalled at the prospect of the suffering that such a policy would entail. An immense assurance of certitude was, I thought, required to justify the deliberate espousal of a policy which entailed such suffering. And could such certitude reasonably be possessed by any human being? Only, I felt, if he were prepared to swallow the Marxist hypothesis whole and to fit every situation within its framework.

To accept a single all-embracing hypothesis, to apply it logically to every conceivable circumstance and to deduce therefrom a policy appropriate to every conceivable occasion, argues a faith appropriate to the fanatic, but not, I felt, to the reasonable man. History reeks with the records of those who have been prepared to drown the world in blood for the sake of an idea; and, almost invariably, the idea has turned out to be false. The rival religious ideas for the sake of which men have killed and tortured their fellows have been almost certainly false; at least, they have been

such that, if one of them were true, then the others could not be. The political ideologies of the present day have inherited the dogmatic assurance of the religious ideologies of the past.

The conflict of the rival certainties in which these assurances issue is one of the features of our time. These certainties are the petrified products of living philosophies. While the philosophies are academic and find expression only in the tenets of a school, they tolerate rivals; indeed, they have no option. But when their tenets are embodied in the programme of a party, and that party is successful in obtaining control of the Government, they develop an intolerance of other philosophies, and of the ways of life and theories of politics which other philosophies countenance and encourage. Communism and Fascism are philosophies of this type. Parties are instruments for precipitating philosophies into action and realizing their tenets in fact. Precipitated into action, realized in fact, these philosophies aspire to control the whole life of man, prescribing his morals, his beliefs, his friendships, and his loyalties, and deciding what he shall read, learn, think, and write. Not content with determining the present, they must also prescribe the future. Thus appears a new race of political Old Moores, each with its own dogma of infallibility, each with its different prophecy of a different future.

Looking back over the history of human enthusiasm evoked on behalf of error, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the best guarantee of the falsehood of a belief is that large numbers of human beings should be found to hold it with passionate intensity. To give these facile enthusiasms the power of silencing those

who venture to oppose them is to give error a charter for the silencing of truth. It is just because men cleave with such perfervid eagerness to whatever beliefs promise to console their spirits or to gratify their pride, that we must, I thought, be doubly anxious in the interests of truth to obtain a fair hearing for the expression of heterodoxy, protest, and dissent.

For my part, I have long held that intensity of belief combined with a willingness to take action in accordance with one's belief is responsible for a large part of the misery and suffering that stain the tragic pages of human history. A greater reluctance to believe propositions which cannot be known to be true, a greater reluctance to act except when it is certain that action will have beneficial results, would have spared mankind most of its wars and all its persecutions. In fact a small diminution of zeal would have meant a great increase in happiness.

I could not expect F to follow me in these reflections. They are, it is obvious, those of a middle-aged Liberal who, caring for reason, distrusts certainty, hates violence, and believes that the sole purpose of Government should be to promote the happiness of the governed. F belongs to a younger and a more determined generation, a generation which—the quotation from Cromwell has put me in mind of it—recalls many of the characteristics of the Puritans and the Ironsides; their certainty in thought, their vigour in action, their willingness to sacrifice comfort to a creed and happiness to an idea. I distrust enthusiasm, am sceptical of all-embracing hypotheses, and cannot subscribe to any creed which is prepared to make the world uncomfortable for those who do not hold it. Now I cannot

avoid the conclusion that F and her kind would make the world exceedingly uncomfortable for me, if their cause were to triumph. . . . Nevertheless, I will do myself the justice to doubt whether this conclusion constitutes the only reason for my inability to give F as many marks for kindness and good sense as I have already given to A.

Chapter XI

REFLECTIONS AND SUMMING UP

*

25th November 1939

I am very fond of winter walking. For one thing, I can walk farther in winter. In July, I am in a bath of perspiration after the first mile, and in need of a rest after the third. In November, I can still do nine or ten without a break, and as I no longer drown my clothes in torrents of sweat, I am not put to the trouble of constantly changing them for fear of lumbago. I feel no need of going to sleep after lunch; for one thing it is too cold; for another, I am not sleepy. And so I can sit on a tree stump and look at nature.

In winter the country is empty. There are no crowds of young people careering through the woods with raucous cries and inane laughter; and by consequence there is no scurf of cigarette cartons, empty tins, and discarded newspapers. If I go to a cheap lodging, a farmhouse or even a Youth Hostel, there are no rowdies from the towns to keep me awake; I have the place to myself.

For the young know little of the joys of winter walking, and only venture into the country in weather that

is fine and warm. Now winter, they think, is cold and wet. Cold it may be, and why not, pray? For my part, I like the cold, which brisks me up so that I can keep up with anybody on a cold day. But wet it most certainly is not, at least, not especially wet. It rains far more, I am convinced, in July and August than ever it does in December and January.

Finally, in the winter I can go across country. There is no undergrowth in the woods; there are no crops in the fields, and no bracken on the slopes. One walks free and unencumbered and, broadly speaking, one walks where one likes.

And how much more one sees! In August the country is muffled under a blanket of dull green. The blanket spoils its shape and blurs its contours. (It is a depressing thought that August, which is the dullest month of the year, is the only month in which most people see the country.) The winds of winter have stripped the blanket away and laid bare the bones and naked structure of the countryside. And how lovely that structure is! I would give all the tender greens of young spring, all the gorgeous colours of the autumn woods' decay, for the bare boughs of an oak with its tracery of little twigs silhouetted against the dark red of an afternoon sky in December. The sun has just set and over against it, glimpsed through the infinitely lovely pattern-work of the twigs, there is an evening star. There is a tang in the air; the earth rings hard under the feet; there will be a frost to-night. So home to a coal fire, with lamplight and the curtains drawn; the kettle boiling on the hob, and crumpets for tea. What has summer to offer comparable to these winter delights?

To-day has been just such a day, and now at the end

of it I am enjoying just such a moment. I left London yesterday evening, spent the night with a friend at Guildford, and took the bus early in the morning to Smithwood Common.

Smithwood Common is within striking distance of that stretch of country which, in the winter, I most love, a stretch which, taking Peaslake as a centre, has for its northern boundary the slopes of the North Downs from Merrow in the west to Headley in the east; for its eastern, a line running through Headley southwards to Ockley; for its southern, the Fold country, which is to be found along the borders of Surrey and Sussex; and for its western, a line running northwards through Hascombe Hill to the Cranleigh–Guildford road. It is a very varied stretch, ranging from wooded chalk downs in the north, through sand hills covered with heather and pine in the middle, to the country of the Weald in the south.

This last is very lovely and has as yet been scarcely defiled by our times. It is a land of little hills and valleys, so small that one's view changes with every half mile; of hazel copses, through which flow little streams; of big parks running up to the foot of the sand hills in the north and studded with mighty trees. The best time for it is early spring, when the primroses and daffodils come as early and as abundantly as anywhere in the south of England. (I have often found primroses under the lee of Pitch Hill in December.) But the flowers here are at all times incredibly profuse, the hazel copses being literally carpeted, first with yellow, and then, as the primroses give way to bluebells, with blue. Carpeted, I insist, is the exact word; you cannot put your foot down without treading on flowers.

Through this country I walked in the morning, going across country from Smithwood to Ewhurst. This part is not well adapted to winter walking, the streams being swollen to little torrents and the mud being the lush, sticky, clay mud of the Weald. But for all that, the walk was lovely enough and I was content. I had my bread, cheese and onion in a little beer house in Ewhurst and listened to the usual talk of the black-out and the high cost of living. (In parenthesis, it is one of the minor drawbacks of the war that it has still further obliterated the already diminishing gulf which separates town from country talk.)

After lunch I climbed up on to Pitch Hill and then went north-west through the great Hurt Wood. A gloomy tract this, where nothing grows and no bird sings, though occasionally a yaffle laughs. The trees are for the most part dwarf oaks which are said to be enormously old, for this is part of the primeval forest of England; but there are also great belts of pines which fringe the sides of ravines, and on a dull day, when the wind soughs through the trees, very sombre they look and very gloomy they sound. But this was a calm afternoon, with a clear light in the sky and just a hint of frost in the air; and by the time I came to the stretch of green country which separates the Hurt Wood from Black Heath, I was in a state of considerable exhilaration. This again is a miniature country of little hills covered with copses, and valleys threaded by streams, but interestingly different from that of the Weald. There the soil is thick and clayey; here, light with an admixture of chalk; as a consequence, the vegetation is less lush, the grass is less green, and the trees smaller. But there are some beautiful hidden valleys running into Black

Heath from the north and from the south sides, and along one of these there runs a brook full of watercress.

I descended at teatime, tired and muddy, upon a friend who lives on the other side of Albury; and now, after a hot bath, am sitting before a fire in my room, looking over the record of conversations which has occupied the main part of this book. I have just begun to read them, and after dinner and a game of billiards at which I expect to beat my host, I shall come early to bed and go on with the reading. Then I shall try to come to some sort of verdict on which to answer the question which set me going on my round of inquiries.

My mood now is very different from that in which this book was conceived. I was then utterly depressed by the war—the outbreak of hostilities had seemed to mark the end of all that I had hoped for, worked for, and cared for—and harassed by the question, what part was I personally to play in it. Like so many of my kind, I had been caught in a dilemma. By training and tradition a pacifist, I had taught myself to believe that no good thing could come of war. On the other hand, the Nazi régime seemed to me to be the greatest outrage upon human decency and dignity that had occurred in the life of civilized man, and I did not then see how it was to be overthrown except by force. Hence my frantic efforts to find a job in a Government Department in which I could take a hand in the work of overthrowing the Nazis, without taking a hand too obviously in the business of killing human beings. A weak, a cowardly compromise, you may say. No doubt, but it seemed at the time the only possible escape from the dilemma in which so many of us found ourselves.

Mercifully, the problem solved itself. My college opened, and into it there came flooding not only the remnants of its old students, but many of those who had been left behind by the evacuation of other London colleges. Soon I was busier than I had ever been, and the questions which had so agitated me at the beginning of the war fell for a time into the background.

Now, sitting by the fire, enjoying that tranquillity of mind which rewards those who walk for a long day alone in the country, I reviewed them. The question which had been initially responsible for sending me on my round of inquiries was, I now saw, foolish, not because it was unanswerable, but because the answer was obvious. Were human beings, I had wondered, as black as Fielding, Swift, and Shaw had painted them? Of course they were not. They were not creatures compact of evil who made use of their reasons only to gratify their passions and justify their vices. On the contrary, they were mixed and in many goodness appeared to predominate. In A, for example, and in E goodness was clearly predominant. I duly upbraided myself for folly, since I had known these things all the time, and it was foolish to have travelled so far and to have talked so long to have established what I already knew, to prove in fact a platitude. It was only in the mood of discouragement born of the outbreak of the second war in twenty-five years, a war which had frustrated all my hopes and convicted of utter failure the long years of work for peace, that I had been led for a moment to doubt what every sensible man knew, that human beings are mixed, and that in many good predominates.

But what then? How came it that, being neither

wholly good nor wholly bad but mixed, individual men and women, when organized in communities, were found so often to be engaged in activities which were almost wholly bad? For example, in war. The motives which induced men to fight in wars were, like other human motives, mixed; some were good, some bad; yet wars, I still felt, were bad through and through. The more I thought, the more puzzling this disparity between the behaviour of individual persons and of persons organized in societies appeared. It is a puzzle whose solution has engaged Niebuhr in that remarkable book, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. I had read the book, but I was still unable to solve the puzzle. Reflecting on it, I turned once again to the commentaries I had made on my journey through the war minds of my friends, hoping they might show me the way to an answer. But, here again, I had to confess that I drew blank. I had approached a number of people with a view to discovering the motives which led them to support the war and the hopes which they entertained in regard to its outcome. Was the war for them a thing wholly bad, an unmitigated catastrophe, a declaration of man's spiritual bankruptcy? Or did they expect that some good would accrue from it, and were their motives in fighting for this good so far creditable?

In the light of these questions, I reviewed my sheaf of answers. A was praiseworthy, but simple. His soul was noble, but his mind limited. He worked for the defeat of the Nazis and for the removal of the threat to human decency and civilization constituted by the Nazi régime. Beyond this he did not see.

B and C were predominantly wicked; they regarded

the war as a licence to indulge the emotions of greed, hatred, and aggressiveness which in ordinary life they had the decency to hold in leash.

D was sensible and intelligent. His attitude was that of a humane and sensitive man, but he was selfish and overmuch concerned for his own safety. E I had found enormously impressive and was quite prepared to believe that he was right. If more men tried to live as he did, the world, it was obvious, would be a better and a happier place. It might very well be the case, I conceded, that in days to come more men would in fact try to live as he did, that evolution, as he himself had hinted, might be preparing a mutation which would result in a race of E's. Meanwhile, however, his remedy was altogether too drastic for fallible human beings to adopt. He had been apt, I thought, to belittle the importance of the war; until human nature changed, little good, he had implied, could be expected anyway, and the war was, therefore, for him only one incident the more to testify to the degradation of man. This attitude was simple and might well be justified, but it offered no remedy for war, neither a recipe for the production of good from the war that was, nor a policy for averting the wars that were to be.

F was sincere and honest, and I respected her; but, like A, she was too simple, nor could I subscribe to the easy assurance with which she drew up her programme of war, civil war, and revolution as a preliminary to saving mankind.

I had talked to many others whose conversations I have not recorded; for example to G, who stood apart from the war and contemplated it as a spectacle, as an audience contemplates the play. G regarded the human

scene as a farmer regards a farmyard. Men were for him a row of puppets pulled by the strings of greed and lust. So it had always been; so, he implied, it always would be. In these circumstances, the part of a wise man was to derive what amusement he could from the spectacle of men running after women and trying to overreach their fellow men.

But no single one of those to whom I had spoken had succeeded in solving for me the problem—it was, I reminded myself, a new problem; one which had emerged from, rather than had prompted my inquiry —the problem, namely, of the disparity between the comparative decency of individual and the unrelieved brutality of collective action. On the one hand were people, all of them mixed, many of them predominantly decent; on the other, were communities which were predominantly savage; on the one hand were the purposes of those whom I had interviewed, purposes which, with the exception of those of B and C, were, even if mistaken, on the whole creditable; on the other, were the infamous methods by which these purposes were being pursued. How came it that the behaviour of men in the mass was so immeasurably lower than that of the same men as individuals; that the State was so much worse than its citizens?

I went down to dinner, played and duly won my game of billiards, and came early to bed. I sat down before the fire with the problem still in my mind. Why was it, I wanted to know, that, while the individual life of man was sometimes good, sometimes bad, the collective life of man was almost wholly bad? But now that I posed the question again, I was, I realized, proceeding on an assumption hitherto unperceived. Was it in fact

true that the collective life of man was wholly bad? Clearly it was not. Churches, clubs, guilds, trade unions, county councils, educational authorities, universities, even tennis clubs—all these were associations of men and women collectively organized for the pursuit and realization of common purposes, and they were on the whole, in regard both to the moral standards which they observed and the conduct on which they embarked, neither better nor worse than the men and women who were organized in them. Many were definitely and predominantly beneficent. But when men and women were collectively organized in States, they seemed, with singular uniformity, to behave like devils. And here, quite suddenly, I saw the answer to my problem. It was not human nature that was the culprit; it was not even human nature when collectively organized, since most organizations of human beings were neutral and many beneficial; it was human nature when collectively organized in and by States. The State, then, was the culprit. And therefore? Therefore the State must be superseded. From which it followed that what one might hope to get out of the war, the one war aim which seemed worth fighting for, was the curtailment of the powers and the supersession of some at least of the functions of the Nation-State.

Once the answer had suggested itself, I explored its possibilities late into the night, and again, when I went walking, the next morning. It turned out to be a key which I found I could apply to problem after problem. There was no end to the doors which it unlocked. I propose, then, to finish this account of my journey through the war mind by giving a summary of the con-

clusions to which I was led and the lines of argument by which I travelled to them. I have tried to expose the war aims of others; I am now to indicate my own, and ask the reader to follow me along the path by which I reached it.

Chapter XII

CONCLUSIONS

1. The Two Policies that Failed

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1

To begin with a retrospect, I have for many years been closely associated with what in this country is called the Peace Movement. The Peace Movement is a loosely organized body with ill defined boundaries comprising a miscellany of societies ranging from Christian-Pacifist groups to branches of the League of Nations Union. Most of these bodies are represented on the National Peace Council, which struggles to weld their multifarious divergences of view into a single policy upon which all its members can unite—with singularly little success; and, as the nineteen-thirties developed on their frightened way, with diminishing success! The main reason for the failure to achieve a united policy has been the clash between those who believed in what they call collective security, and those who, for short and hoping not to be misunderstood, I propose to call 'pure' pacifists. The former looked to the League to assure the peace of the world and were prepared to back its authority with force, so

that it might if necessary act in restraint of aggressors. The latter maintained that you could not overcome force by force, even though it were the force of law, and that shells and bombs would not shatter, mutilate, burn, or poison the less because they were the instruments of an impartial authority carrying out punitive measures at the behest of the assembled nations against the breakers of the world's peace. For my part, I was, during most of this period, of the former party. Just as the force of the community of individuals was vested in the law and the policeman to restrain the thug, so, I thought, the force of the community of nations should be vested in an international law and an international police force to restrain an aggressor nation. But the force *must* be international; it *must* be law that it enforced, and the authority which decreed its exercise *must* be impartial. Did the League fulfil these conditions?

As the years passed, it became manifest that it did not. As Japan left it, followed by Germany and then by Italy, the League stood forth with increasing clearness as an alliance of satisfied powers determined to maintain the *status quo*. It was dominated by two retired burglars, England and France, grown respectable on the proceeds of past loot and resolved to discourage any new recruits to their old profession. In these circumstances, force exercised by the League would, it seemed to me, be force used to back the claims of one side in the time-honoured conflict between two competing groups of powers, and not to maintain the rule of law against the law-breaker.

But there was a further and more fundamental flaw in the League. Each of its member States retained their

full and independent sovereignty. In other words, while co-operating in the deliberations and contributing to the decisions of the League, they retained the right to withdraw from the deliberations and flout the decisions; they retained, in short, the right to do as they liked.

Being easily wise after the event, I realized at once, or thought I did, that this flaw was fatal. How could the nations co-operate to make an international society if each remained at liberty to ignore the wishes and set aside the decisions of his fellow co-operators, whenever it suited him? It was exactly as if one tried to establish a society of individuals subject to a common law, yet conceded to each the right to ignore the law whenever its decisions displeased him. Supporters of the League, including myself, had spoken solemnly and often about the importance of ending the international anarchy by subjecting the nations to the rule of law; but it was surely obvious, at least it was obvious to me now, that while each nation maintained its full and independent sovereign rights, it was no more subject to the rule of law than it had been before the League was set up. We had urged the necessity of appealing to the pooled authority of all in order to restrain the aggression of any; but how could authority be pooled when there was no common institution to act as its repository? The League was not such a common institution; in fact it was not an institution at all. It was merely an assembly of independent units who, because they *were* independent, could flout its decisions so long as they chose to remain within it, and contract out of it when they chose no longer.

The League, then, was hamstrung from the first by

the retention on the part of its members of their full rights of independent action. If they had not chosen to insist upon these rights, the League might perhaps have worked. But how strenuously in practice they did choose; how zealously they clung to the sovereign independence which made the effective working of the League impossible.

Indeed, the League prided itself precisely on its inability to control its members. When the Covenant was drawn up, the greatest care was taken not to insert any clause which might be thought to infringe the jealously guarded sovereignties of the member States, with the result that, at the opening of the Assembly in September 1922, the President was in a position to assure his hearers of the League's complete innocuousness. Some, he said, had regarded the League with suspicion, fearing lest it might interfere with the sovereignty of independent nations. He was anxious to assure his hearers that it would do nothing of the kind (loud applause), since the constituent States would retain untrammelled their right of free, individual decision.

What was the result? In order that the League might be in a position to take effective action upon any question, its decisions had to be unanimous. They had, therefore, to be such as suited the interests of all the member States. Now in the world of controversy, particularly in the world of diplomatic controversy, a question is something which divides people. There are, as we say, two sides to every question. To no question, therefore, which arose was there any answer which equally suited the interests of all the members. Therefore on no question could there be unanimity, and,

therefore, on no question could the League take effective action; its members could only talk.

Here, then, it was clear, was the flaw which had vitiated the conception of the League from the first. As long as States maintained their sovereign rights unimpaired, there could be no collective government and there could, therefore, be no collective security. Senator Borah, when Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the American Senate, had announced once and for all the doctrine whose real significance I had now for the first time come to appreciate:

'There are some things in this world more to be desired than peace, and one of them is the unembarrassed and unhampered and untrammelled political independence of this republic—the right and power to determine in every crisis, when that crisis comes, untrammelled by any previous commitments, the course which it is best for the people of this nation to pursue. If peace cannot be had without our surrendering that freedom of action, then I am not for peace.'

It was impossible not to agree with Senator Borah that peace cannot be had without surrendering the State's freedom of action. I differed from him only in preferring peace to freedom of action for States.

II

When the League had degenerated into an alliance of the *status quo* powers, I had reverted to the pacifism which I had inherited from the previous war, and which I had abandoned when the League was first formed. I was prepared to employ force to back the

law, but I was not prepared to employ it to enable one State or set of States to impose its will upon another. After the Abyssinian episode, therefore, I had reverted to the policy of what I have called 'pure' pacifism. My attitude in fact had been very similar to that of D. But, unlike D, I had been unhappy in this attitude and dissatisfied with its implications.

It seemed to me that a pacifist who hated war above all things must wish to prevent it. But had pacifists a policy by following which it might be possible to prevent it? Yes, they had. The policy was to convert a sufficient number of people in some one large and powerful country to their point of view. When this had been done, the country would refuse to fight in defence of its interests, and even if it were invaded by an aggressor, there would be no war. The pacifists would then set to work to civilize the occupying aggressor as the Greeks civilized the Romans, or the Southern Chinese the Mongols from the north.

The drawback to this policy was the length of time that it would take to reach fruition. It would not be enough, I reflected, to convert a majority to pacifism in any single State; it would be necessary to convert the whole population. For so long as a reasonably vigorous, belligerent, bloody-minded minority remained unconverted, there would always be a danger of the minority staging a *coup d'état* against the pacifist majority. I tried to imagine what would happen in England if (*a*) most, but not all, people were converted to pacifism; (*b*) a fairly substantial minority remained unconverted; (*c*) the country were threatened by an aggressive Fascist State. The pacifist majority in Parliament would, presumably, hasten to disembarrass itself of the Empire

and invite the Fascist enemy to invade the country if he so desired, preparing its people at the same time to practise the technique of non-resistance.

The unconverted minority, enraged at this display of lily-livered pusillanimity, would stage a *coup d'état*, seize the Government, and defy the enemy. If its defiance were unsuccessful, it would either accept a proposal to govern for and in the name of the Fascist enemy—the pacifist majority having, of course, refused to carry on any government at the behest of or in the interests of Fascism—or it would conclude a Brest-Litovsk peace and then devote all its energies to preparations for a war of revenge. In either event the pacifist majority would be persecuted, its leaders tortured or shot, while its supporters, penalized in the economic field, would be unable to obtain employment unless they recanted or kept silent about their views. All this, it may be said, might not matter very much. Martyrs have stood firm before now and, provided that the majority were united in their determination to practise the technique of non-resistance, the Government could not shake them.

Perhaps not, but what of their children? They, presumably, would be taken into the schools where they would be taught Fascist doctrines by Fascist teachers; taught, therefore, to despise the pacifism of their parents, to work for a national renascence conceived in militaristic terms, and to live for revenge not only upon the enemy who had defeated them, but upon the pacifist generation who, they would be told, were responsible for the defeat. In brief, their fate would be a replica of the fate of the children of pacifist, socialist, and liberal parents in Germany under the Nazi régime.

I concluded that even if a majority (but not the whole) in any one country were converted to pacifism, the pursuit of a pacifist policy by that country would be of short duration. It would at most last for not more than one generation, and the children would grow up to betray the ideals of the parents. In order that a policy of pacifism might be effectively pursued, it would, I thought, be necessary to make converts of *all* the inhabitants of the country, and this clearly was impracticable; impracticable at any rate within any foreseeable period. For such conversion entailed nothing less than a change in human nature, a change such as E had advocated. E, I thought, was right in holding that such a change would be necessary if pacifism were to become not only a mode of believing, but a way of living; right too, perhaps, in thinking that, only if it did become a way of living, could it save our civilization.

But how was such a change to be effected? I could not myself attach much importance to the theory of an imminent mutation in the human species which would consist in an enlargement of consciousness. Such a mutation might, of course, be imminent, but obviously one could not bank on it. And short of a mutation, the question still required an answer, how was the change to be effected?

By moral exhortation? But all the evidence seemed to show that you could not cause people to behave differently merely by telling them that they ought to behave differently; that you could not, in other words, improve their morals by exhorting them to be moral. I thought in this connection of the point that E had made in connection with the history of Christianity.[1] It

[1] See page 181.

was impossible, I reflected, to ignore the significance of the spectacle of a civilization devoting all its energies to the successful prosecution of activities from which for two thousand years it had been exhorted by its religion to refrain, and then using its reason to cheat itself into believing that its religion justified the activities which it explicitly condemned.

I concluded that the chance of so increasing the number of pacifists that the practice of war would be discontinued by reason of men's refusal to fight in it, was remote. What followed? It followed that pacifism was not a policy designed to obviate the present danger and free the world from war. It was at most a recipe for right conduct if war came, not a device for war's prevention; a standby for the individual, not a policy for the nation. Pacifism, I concluded regretfully, was still in the Utopian category. It was not yet practical politics, and that change in human nature upon which its practicability as a means of avoiding war depended was not only not occurring, we simply did not know how to cause it to occur.

But—and here my thoughts took a new turn—was it really necessary that such a change should occur? I reviewed my two conclusions. The League had failed to stop war because it had failed to supersede State sovereignty. Pacifism had failed to stop war because there were not enough pacifists, nor, short of a change in human nature, were there likely to be enough. But suppose that State sovereignty *had* been superseded by the League; then it was at least possible, nay more, it was probable, that the League would have succeeded in stopping war. What had D said? 'More and more of us are coming to realize that it is only by supersed-

ing some, at least, of the powers of sovereign, nation States and vesting them in a common government that we can lay the foundation of a durable peace.' 'More and more of us are coming to realize!' Well, I was one, one of those who had come to realize the necessity of taking away some part of the power of the sovereign, independent State, and of vesting it in a super-State government. Was a change in human nature necessary before this could be done? Obviously it was not.

I thought of the evils that had oppressed men's life in the past, of gladitorial games and slavery and duelling and persecutions for witchcraft. Each must, at the time, have seemed irremediable, irremediable because human nature being what it was you could not, it would be said, change that in it which produced the evil. Yet all these evils had in fact disappeared. I thought, for example, of duelling. In the eighteenth century most men of honour had worn swords, and, being extremely touchy in regard to points of honour, were constantly using them to defend their honour. By some means or other men were persuaded to abandon the curious belief that the most effective way of demonstrating that you are in the right in a quarrel is to make a hole in your adversary. Swords were accordingly abolished and men substituted the law court for the duelling ground.

Or there was the disappearance from Europe of plague, a fact to whose significance my attention had recently been drawn by Sir Norman Angell. The situation in the Middle Ages in regard to plague was, he had pointed out, not unlike the contemporary situation in regard to war. The communities of Europe

were swept by repeated pestilences which decimated the population. Just as men beset the statesmen of today and ask them how to cure war, so they flocked to the doctors of the fourteenth century and asked them how to cure plague. And just as the statesmen of today offer, when approached, an infinite variety of different and self-contradictory proposals, so did the doctors of the Middle Ages offer a bewildering miscellany of cures that were no cures. And because no doctor knew of any cure, each professed to know of a different cure. Perhaps the most popular of all the accredited methods of meeting the situation was the method of prayer. People crowded into the churches and prayed to God to avert the pestilence, thereby providing the best possible conditions for the spread of contagion.

But though the doctors could not tell the people what steps to take to cure the plague, they could tell them what steps to take if they wished to avoid it. 'The position', they said in effect, 'is perfectly simple. If you wish to prevent plague, keep sewage out of your water.' And in due course, when they had suffered badly enough and long enough, suffered for several hundred years to the tune of several million lives, human beings saw the doctors' point, devised a system of sanitation, and ceased to suffer from plagues. And the inference? That human beings really are teachable. If they are suffering from some palpable evil, and if you can show them how the evil may be prevented, then when the evil has continued long enough and they have suffered badly enough, provided that you have in no way relaxed your efforts at demonstration but have continued to entreat them, arguing the while

patiently, cogently, and persuasively in favour of the means of prevention that lie to hand, you can in the end induce them to do what is necessary to save themselves. In the end men will always see the point; and in the end they will see the necessity of superseding the power of the State if they wish to avoid war, just as they saw the necessity of sanitation when they wished to avoid plague.

If, then, human beings had succeeded in abolishing slavery and cholera and duelling and witchcraft trials without changing their natures, why should they not succeed in superseding some at least of the powers of the State? For it was not, I reflected, necessary to do anything so drastic as to abolish the State. It would be enough to take away from it those of its functions by reason of which it became embroiled with other States.

Chapter XIII

CONCLUSIONS

2. The Villain of the Contemporary Piece

*

What were these functions? In search of an answer I considered the constitution of the United States. Having visited and lectured in America, I saw absolutely no reason to suppose that American nature was in any way superior to British; in fact in some respects. . . . However, I wish to conciliate Americans, not to provoke them, and here and now I put a righteous and determined stop to the train of thought which I have just started. But though American nature is unregenerate human nature, it apparently does not lead American States to go to war with other American States. Delaware Bridge separates the State of Pennsylvania from that of New Jersey. The two States might conceivably have had disputes in the past in regard to the regulations governing the use of the bridge. I knew in fact that they had had such disputes; but they had not gone to war with one another. Yet the inhabitants of Great Britain and Germany, had their territories been joined by a similar bridge over whose use similar controversies had arisen,

might, if their history were any guide, quite conceivably have gone to war. Whether they had gone to war or not, they would have threatened war, alleging that their honour was involved, their sacred rights imperilled, their historic claims denied, and all the rest of the pernicious nonsense by means of which States seek to disguise the motives of greed, predatoriness, and vaingloriousness by which their policies are in fact inspired.

Why the difference? Because the governments of the States of New Jersey and Pennsylvania acknowledge a common superior, the Federal Government of the United States, in which the people of both are represented, and because they had not the right to levy armies. The governments of Great Britain and Germany have no such federal superior and have the right to levy armies.

Two conclusions seemed to follow. First, the reason why the State has become a danger to mankind is that it acknowledges no superior, recognizes no right save the right to pursue its own interests and, if it finds itself embroiled in a dispute with another State, claims to be both judge and jury in its own cause. Secondly, this claim is dangerous precisely because the State is in a position to levy armed forces with which to back it. Consequently the answer to the question: 'Of which of its functions must the independent sovereign State be deprived?', was that it must be deprived of the power of enforcing its will upon other States by force of arms.

Were there any other functions which came into the same category? Obviously there were. A State's activities, I reflected, fell into two main groups. There were

activities which related to and affected only its own members, and there were activities which necessarily affected the members of other States. In the former group were the activities involved in the education of its citizens, the making of its roads, the building of its houses, the establishment of its medical and sanitary services, the passing of laws to regulate the sexual relations of its citizens, and to restrain offenders against the public peace; in other words, education, transport, housing, sanitation, the moral code, and the penal system. In the latter were armaments and defence—how profoundly, for example, had German rearmament affected the lives of people in Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Poland and, less directly, but no less profoundly, the lives of the people of France and England; trade—the Ottawa agreement, by making a closed preferential trading system of parts of the British Empire, had reacted adversely upon the economic situation of Continental peoples and accelerated the forces making for war; population questions—it was, I thought, impossible to gauge the full effect of America's decision to close her doors against all immigrants, except a small number of the well-to-do, upon the Italian demand for an Empire and the German craving for *Lebensraum*; currency and finance, since the activities of a State in these spheres produce repercussions all over the world.

It followed that within these spheres the State could no longer be safely permitted to be the sole arbiter of its activities. One does not, after all, extend to the Lancashire County Council the sole right of making decisions and initiating actions which profoundly affect the inhabitants of Yorkshire. Why, then, should a

State be allowed to claim the right of sole determination in regard to matters which affect the citizens of other States?

It was not easy to see the justification for this claim. But then there were a number of State claims whose justification it was not easy to see; for example, the claims which the State made upon its own members. I suppose that every group that has ever existed makes *some* claims upon its members. Even my tennis club expects me to pay my subscription and to enter the names of visitors in a book. But the State exerts an authority of a quite peculiar kind; it requires its members to kill other human beings whom they have never seen, whenever it deems the mass slaughter of the citizens of some other State to be in its interests, and exacts from them the most horrible sacrifices, whenever it is persuaded that its welfare may be promoted by harming the citizens of an alleged enemy. What is more, it imprisons, persecutes, tortures, and even kills its members when they evince any symptoms of disinclination or demur. A truly remarkable claim!

If I had decided to belong to a State, choosing and indeed embracing it of my own free act because of some advantage which I conceived it might confer upon me, well and good. I should have made a free choice of the State with all its drawbacks and disabilities, and, having made my political bed, might reasonably be expected to lie on it; but I have done no such thing. Indeed, the State is the only one, of all the various organizations to which I belong, that I have not voluntarily joined. I thought of my club, my tennis club, my professional organization, my philosophical society: each I had joined of my own free choice, be-

coming a member because membership satisfied some need of my body or mind. What was true of me was true of everybody I knew. We all of us formed societies because of some definite benefit we expected to derive from them. Broadly, the societies which men voluntarily join are of two kinds; for the furtherance of economic purposes and for the satisfaction of ethical needs. They join a trade union or found a business because they hope to fill their pockets; they join a church or become members of an ethical society because they hope to save their souls. But to the State alone they belong for no other reason than that they happen to have been born in a certain bedroom; they belong, in other words, because of a mere topographical accident over which, presumably, they have exercised no control.

Having regard to this accidental and involuntary character of one's membership, one would have thought that the State would have been less exacting than other organizations in regard to the claims which it made upon its members. In fact, however, it was infinitely more exacting and insisted upon its right to override the claims of all other organizations, including even those of the Christian Church. How significant, for example, was its treatment of the conscientious objector who professed a crude type of E's form of pacifism. What, in effect, was his claim? 'I recognize that I am a member of a political association called the State, and that this association from which I derive my social consciousness has important claims upon me. At the same time, I am a member of another and larger association, namely, the human race. In certain cases the claims of the State and the claims of humanity may conflict; such an occasion has now arisen, and I am

bound to consider to which of the two I owe the greater allegiance. It is not a foregone conclusion that I should in all circumstances submit to the claims of the State, and I must above all things retain the right to decide according to the dictates of my conscience.'

'Not at all!' the State replies. 'I am not interested in your membership of this abstraction that you call humanity. I am not even interested in what Christ said on the subject of non-resistance—I notice, by the way, that the leaders of His Church are very far from endorsing His subversive doctrines—I am only interested in winning this war against —— State' (the blank can be filled in according to choice and circumstances) 'and you have got to help me whether you like it or not.'

'Does helping you mean shooting the inhabitants of ——?'

'Yes, it probably does.'

'Very well, then,' says the conscientious objector, 'I won't do it.'

'Oh, you won't, won't you?' says the State. 'Then if you won't shoot the ——s, I will shoot you.'

'Very good,' says the conscientious objector. 'Fire away.'

Just as by insisting that they should take part in its quarrels the State does violence to its members' bodies, so by insisting that they should take the same view of the rights and wrongs of its quarrels as it does itself, the State does violence to its members' minds. It requires an individual to believe and to maintain that the interests of a country, his own, are more important, its moral virtue higher, than they would have been, had he been born anywhere else. Those who refuse to take

the same views of the overriding importance of its interests and the superiority of its virtue as it does itself are persecuted as heretics if they are born within its borders, and shot as enemies if they are born without. Finally, not content with enlisting supporters in this world, it extends its claims to the next, insists that God no less than its members must see eye to eye with its statesmen, and credits Him with a desire for its victory. Shaw has referred somewhere to the 'sound British patriotism of the Almighty', but the Almighty's patriotism would seem to vary according to the country of the person who invokes it.

No less peculiar than the State's claims are its methods. If my tennis club has a row with the club in the next suburb, its members cut the members of the rival club, or, if things are very bad, go to law with them. The members of other bodies, even of some political bodies, do the same. Thus if the inhabitants of one American State are engaged in a dispute with those of another regarding the rights of way over a bridge or along a road which is the boundary line between the two States, they refer the dispute to the Federal Government and abide by its decision. They do not, that is to say, try to impose their will upon one another by force of arms, nor do they believe that they can establish the superior rightness of their particular view of the matter by killing the inhabitants of the neighbouring State. If they took up arms for this purpose, they would be suppressed by the Federal Government. Yet if a similar dispute were to arise between two nation States, there is always the chance that it may issue in war. If the States were great powers, the chances of war would be considerably increased. Why, then, this difference in

method? Because States are sovereign and recognize no authority except their own will, which they are prepared to impose upon others by force of arms.

At this point a third peculiarity of the State obtruded itself, namely, its peculiar standard of values. Actions which arouse the horror of all civilized men when performed by individuals become the theme of widespread admiration when performed by States, or by individuals on behalf of States. 'What scoundrels we should be', wrote Cavour, 'if we did for ourselves what we are doing for Italy.' The twentieth century enthusiastically concurs. 'Any means, however immoral,' writes a Nazi philosopher, 'can legitimately be resorted to for the seizure and preservation of sovereign authority.' Quite so. They can be, have been, and are. It is not merely that lying, deceit, spying, and corruption are the natural weapons of the diplomatists and apologists of the State, just as greed, predatoriness, pride, and vanity are its natural motives. More important is the consideration that what religion expressly repudiates in one of the ten commandments, what the moral sense of mankind condemns and law seeks to punish with the ultimate penalty, namely, the murder of one's fellow men, is not only justified, but enjoined as a sacred duty, when it is performed at the order of and in the interests of the State. Indeed, every time they quarrel, States require the performance of this duty from all male members who are physically capable of performing it. . . . Certainly the methods employed and the standards of virtue invoked by the State are peculiar.

This last consideration led to another. The State commended as moral that which in every other con-

nection is denounced as immoral. But was not this commendation symbolical? Was it not symbolical of the fact that in every direction and in every connection the State regarded itself as exempt from the ordinary canons of morality?

Morality demands that one should sometimes acknowledge a higher law than one's own interests. The State acknowledges only its interests. Morality requires me sometimes to make a distinction between what I would like to do and what I ought to do. The State recognizes only what it would like and dismisses the word 'ought' as one to which it can attach no meaning. The State in fact is the only organized body in the world for which the word 'ought' has no meaning.

Not only is it not ashamed of its repudiation of morals; the State explicitly avows it. I had just been reading W. B. Curry's book, *The Case for Federal Union.* It was rich with affirmations by statesmen of the amorality of the bodies whom they represent. Here, for example, was Lord Salisbury animadverting upon Russia. 'Let those take who have the power, let those keep who can, is practically the only rule of Russia's policy.' In a curious outburst of honesty he was moved to add: 'Wherein I am bound to add she does not differ widely from many other States.' I had already noted Senator Borah's succinct expression of the State's right to pursue its own ends unaffected by any moral considerations, while I was familiar with Hegel's assertion that it is only in war that the State fully realizes its innate potentialities. As I went through the list of the State's attributes, as I reflected upon the nature of its authority, the demands which it makes upon its members, its imperviousness to any consideration but its

own interest, and its claim to exemption from the canons of morality which are recognized to be binding upon individuals; as I considered the devastation which it had wrought during my own lifetime, and contemplated the pass to which it had reduced the Western world, there formed gradually in my mind a picture of the State as the great contemporary foe of human happiness, the scourge of our times, the peculiar and distinctive form in which Satan had chosen to manifest himself for the misery and bedevilment of twentieth-century man.

Wherein, I asked myself, is to be found the greatest enemy to the happiness of contemporary man? In poverty? Possibly. In pain? Perhaps. In the wickedness of the human heart? No doubt.

But these are secular evils; they have oppressed men in all times; they are in no sense distinctive of our own. Laying stress upon the word 'contemporary', I should look in a different direction and answer that it is in the nation State. It is the unchecked power of the nation State which for a generation has darkened the horizon of men's lives and to-day drives them to their destruction. The nation State regards itself as sole arbiter of right and wrong, claims to be judge and jury in its own cause, acknowledges no law to govern its relations with other States and no morality in restraint of its designs upon neighbours. Over the lives and liberties of its citizens it exercises an absolute control.

It tramples upon the liberties of individuals in order to establish its independence. While proclaiming its determination to be free, it deprives its citizens of their freedom; for when the State goes to war, to preserve its independence, what man may call his soul his own?

It is the enemy of culture no less than of happiness, and that it may pursue its fancied interests withholds from men the use of their own greatest gifts. On the day on which these lines were written, I had talked with a German refugee, a pianist of international reputation. He had been playing privately to a few of us after dinner and we were unanimous in declaring that we had rarely heard better playing. He told us that when he was permitted to enter England the condition was imposed that he should make no public display of his great talents. As a consequence people are deprived of the pleasure of listening to a great artist, while he devotes his talents to an obscure process involved in the manufacture of tobacco machines.

I had read in the paper only two days before of the enrolment of a corps of refugee doctors. They were to be used primarily for war work on the home front. To repair broken bodies, to amputate shattered limbs, to perform operations, to diagnose and to heal sickness, to render any of the innumerable forms of service for which they were qualified by their talents and training? Not at all. 'They are only to be allowed to act as stretcher-bearers or to assist at first-aid posts,' said a British woman doctor, interested in the welfare of refugees. 'The General Medical Council', she added, 'does not acknowledge Continental degrees!' In other words, because of the State and the sentiment of nationalism which the State fosters, men born in bedrooms a few hundred or thousand miles to the eastward are not allowed to expend their skill in relieving the suffering of those born on a different line of longitude.

The State was an obvious anachronism. Here was a world which was manifestly driving towards econo-

mic unity, which was, indeed, over large areas, already a single economic unity. My aunt, who lives on her dividends in a Bournemouth boarding-house, had just applied to me for financial assistance. She could not, she found, pay her bills. Why not?—for my aunt is an honest woman who would strain herself to the utmost to meet her liabilities! Because her dividends had fallen away to nothing. Why had her dividends fallen away? Because of the war in China combined with a series of strikes in Japan. My aunt's difficulties were symbolic, symbolic of the fact that the world has to-day become a vast echoing chamber in which whatever happens anywhere produces reverberations everywhere.

The chief factor in establishing this underlying structural unity is the abolition of distance. Our world is one in which it takes a shorter time to travel from London to New York than one hundred and fifty years ago it took to travel from York to London. It is only to-day, I reflected, that the effects of this shrinkage of the world's size are becoming apparent. Nor is this advance in the speed and range of the increase in the facilities for human intercourse likely to stop. We can to-day talk with one another from the ends of the earth; in a dozen years we shall see one another face to face; to-day we can fly in the air; to-morrow we shall fly in the stratosphere, and so on.

The changes in the range and scale and pace of living resulting from the abolition of distance are prodigious. Yet while the circumstances of our lives have changed beyond the imagination of our predecessors, our political structure has remained stationary. While the world has shrunk to the size of a continent, the

boundaries of the nation States have remained constant. The horse and foot mode of travel is outmoded, yet we still live in horse and foot communities. The world is economically a single whole, yet politically it is based upon the assumption that it is a congeries of economically self-sufficient national units.

For across the surface of this world run the frontiers of the nation States. Many of these were fixed in the remote past; the most recent date for the most part from the eighteenth century. They represent a mode of living very different from that of to-day. When a man could travel for several days through the territory of a single State, State frontiers made some sort of sense; to-day, when he can fly in twenty-four hours across the boundaries of half a dozen States, they make nonsense. An airman looks down upon a stretch of country which wears much the same appearance. What is it to him, whether he is on the Dutch side of the frontier or the Belgian?

In the new situation created by the abolition of distance, it is only by resorting to every kind of artificial device that the State can preserve its integrity, only by restricting and impeding the free flow of commodities and communications that it can succeed in holding up the manifest drive of the world towards unity. This is the meaning of the tariffs and the quotas, the export and the import duties, the currency restrictions and customs and passports and all the other devices by means of which the State seeks to preserve its integrity and barricade itself against its neighbours. How else is it to resist the continuously increasing pressure from its neighbours? Yet none of these devices can indefinitely avail it. For, as the world shrinks, its

member States will be jostled ever more closely together, until the pressure grows so severe that, unless by then they have consented to soften the hard outlines of their separate individualities, they will grind one another to pieces.

Concurrently with the shrinkage in the size of man's world has come the increase in man's power. Human beings are enormously more destructive than they have been before, and, unless they can learn to control the powers with which science has invested them, they will destroy themselves altogether. War, in short, is a self-indulgence that we can no longer afford. It followed that we could no longer afford to permit States to indulge in the mischief-making that to led to war, and since the peculiarities of the State's methods, morals, and pretensions gave, as I had seen, little hope of the mischief coming to an end so long as States retained their power to make it, one was driven inevitably to the conclusion that their power must be taken away.

I returned to the point from which this train of reflection had started. The State, I had suggested, was the greatest single enemy to the happiness of contemporary man. All the considerations which had subsequently suggested themselves, the peculiarity of the State's methods and morals, the arbitrariness of its claims, the abolition of distance, the change in the range and scale of human living, the growing economic unity of the world, the artificiality of the States' boundaries and frontiers, the vastly increased destructiveness of human beings, had contributed to enforce this view. As I regarded it more closely and, in the light of these considerations, more unfavourably, the State assumed in my eyes the aspect of an idol, the special and peculiar

idol of civilized man, which yet retained all the characteristics of the idols to which savages had sacrificed in the remote past. It seemed to me that in the growth of the power and importance of these idols is one of the greatest menaces to man's happiness. Like the gods of old, they are jealous, violent, and revengeful. They bear, indeed, a frightful resemblance to the Jehovah of the Old Testament, whom they have supplanted. To them belong the energies, the thoughts, the desires, the very lives of their citizens. They are the gods; the officers of the army and navy are their high priests, the people their sacrifice. In war-time they claim to be omnipotent and would make the same claim, if they dared, in peace. Yet in spite of their power and prestige, these States are figments, owning no reality except by virtue of men's belief in them. There is, in fact, no political reality except in the individual, and no good for the State other than the good of the living men and women who call themselves its citizens. And because States are figments, and because living human beings alone are real, the alleged good of the State is not worth the suffering of a single individual citizen. Those abstract ends of the State for which wars are fought are of less value than a single man's blood, or a single woman's tears. How long, one cannot help wondering, will men continue to sacrifice their lives and happiness on the altar of a nonentity? For one truth it seemed to me stood out clear amid the chaos of our time: until mankind has outgrown the worship of these idols, curtailed their powers and transferred their jealously guarded sovereignties to some supernational authority, there will be neither peace nor lasting progress in the world.

Why, then, were the idols still tolerated? Partly because their cult and worship had for many of us taken the place of religion. The new religion, the religion of Nationalism, had not supplanted the old, the religion of God; it had simply taken it over. The State had captured the Almighty and transferred His attributes to itself. The British, I reflected, were in no sense peculiar in their identification of God's sentiments with their own; every nation felt equally assured of His support in its disputes and invoked with equal confidence His benediction upon its cause.

> *To God the embattled nations ing and shout,*
> *'Gott strafe England' and 'God Save the King'.*
> *'God this', 'God that', and 'God the other thing'.*
> *'Good God!' said God, 'I've got my work cut out.'*

Sir John Squire's poem, written at the beginning of the last war, had, I felt, lost none of its force; nor, so long as the religion of Nationalism reigned supreme, would it do so.

Chapter XIV

CONCLUSIONS

3. The War Aim that Seemed Worth While

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My reflections had wandered over a considerable range of territory, but they were, I felt, coming to their conclusion. I was conscious of a number of currents which, taking their rise from widely different sources, were running strongly together in the same direction. I had wondered whether human beings were wholly evil; I had speculated upon men's motives for entering this war; I had asked what good thing one could hope to save from its wreckage. Throughout I had been half-consciously in quest of a war aim, something which, without justifying this fresh outbreak of destruction which had nullified the efforts and killed the hopes of my generation, would yet make of the war a thing not wholly evil. What might this something be? My thoughts, hitherto fluid, congealed and took shape. What was it that I wanted out of this war? It was the supersession of some at least of the powers and functions of the nation State.

How was this supersession to be achieved? Its achievement clearly demanded a decline in the religion of

Nationalism and the provision of other and wider channels along which the sentiments that inspired it might flow. For, once it was admitted that man was capable of subordinating his interests to those of a group and sacrificing himself for his fellows, there seemed to be no logical reason for stopping short of the whole of mankind. Here, then, was a task for wartime, to spread scepticism in regard to the religion of State worship, to arouse disgust for the amorality of the State's methods, and to try to extend the area over which the sentiment of patriotism, which at present supported the State, operated.

25th December, Christmas Day!

I have spent part of it reading over what I have just written. Again my mood is different from that which found expression in the preceding two chapters; yet there is little with which I would now disagree. The last month has been crowded with activity. There have been more students to teach than I have ever had; students proposing to undertake unusual tasks—to write theses, for example, on Problems of Adolescence with special reference to Problems of Pubescence (as if I knew anything about such things except by way of reminiscence) or on Vedanta Philosophy in the light of Western Epistemology; or on the universe in general—and requiring, therefore, special provision and supervision. There have been courses of lunch-hour lectures at which Harold Nicolson, J. B. S. Haldane, and myself have talked to audiences nearly a thousand strong. There have been meetings, Federal Union meetings, political meetings, philosophical meetings, Peace Council meetings—all of them

crowded. Never, indeed, have I known such a time for meetings. One goes to speak to some insignificant college society, too poor or too humble to advertise itself; one turns up expecting to find at the most some thirty or forty sheepish students, and instead the place is crowded with an expectant mass of people standing and sitting all over the floor. Never have I seen such interest in public affairs, such concern for the present, such apprehension of the future, such zeal to make the future better than the present. Dazed and bewildered by what has happened to them, people seem to me to be looking as never before for something to attract their interests, to fill their lives, to canalize their aspirations and to crystallize their hopes.

Nobody knows how the war will go or how it will end, but it is clear that civilization hangs on the verge of possible disaster; collective security has broken down; pacifism is not enough; religion has lost its hold. How, then, men ask, how are we to be saved? The question is perennial. It rings through the galleries of history. The curious thing is that for once there appears to be an answer to it. And the answer is that they can be saved by Federation; which brings me back to the interrupted thread of my reflections, to resume and to develop the line of thought I had started.

For Federal Union is in the air; it is, if I may so put it, 'all the go'. Of all the meetings which I have attended since the war none have been so crowded, or so eager as those which have been called to discuss Federal Union. One has had the impression of being in at the birth of a new movement which, begotten of the strains and stresses of our times, may yet prove our salvation.

Yet there is one embarrassment. The case for Federal Union, like the case against war, is so strong that it cannot seriously be answered. All the arguments are on one side. The fact is ominous. On the celebrated issue of Peace versus War all the arguments are also on one side. Yet we still get war. It is not enough, it seems, to convince people's reasons; for the conviction of the reason does not appear to generate the will to put into practice that of which the reason is convinced.

But here I took myself up. Is that really true? I asked myself. It certainly appears to be true at the moment, and admittedly, it nowhere appears to be truer than in its bearing upon war. But the appearances may be deceptive.

I forced myself to think again of the evils that have disappeared from the life of man; of the gladiatorial games and the duelling and the persecution of witches; to think in particular of the abolition of plague and the establishment of sanitation. Is it not reasonable, I asked myself, to suppose that human beings will one day see the necessity of superseding the sovereign powers of the anarchic nation States if they are to avert war, as they saw the necessity of establishing a sanitary system when they wished to avert the plague? Human beings, in fact, are not permanently incorrigible; they only seem to be so, because it takes them so long to make up their minds to do what they know to be necessary for their own salvation.

Moreover, I reflected, this movement to establish a common government was the expression of a world process which was bound, sooner or later, to result in a Federal system, even if it did not come in time to save this civilization. For Federalism is in the direct

line of the biological process which we know as evolution. Though the evolutionary process may not be making for a mutation in man's consciousness, as E had supposed, it is almost certainly making for an enlargement of man's political organization. Attending a meeting of the British Association, I had heard Dr. Langdon Browne describe how the course of evolution witnesses a progressive increase not in the size of the cell or of the individual, but of the unit of organization. Evolution, in fact, is a process by which ever more numerous and diverse units are integrated into ever richer and more comprehensive wholes. The earliest forms of life are unicellular. An advance takes place when numbers of unicellular units come together to constitute an individual who is a colony of cells. At a very early stage in the evolution of vertebrate mammals individual joins with individual to constitute the family. At an early stage in the evolution of human beings family integrates with family to form a larger whole, the tribe; later, tribe joins with tribe to constitute a whole yet larger, the State; and State, one would suppose, must finally combine with State to make a Union of States. One can see the process happening in the history of our own country. In the beginning, the men of Dover are fighting against the men of Canterbury. A little later, the men of Kent are fighting against the men of Wessex; a little later still, the men of southern England against the men of Mercia, or of Mercia against Northumbria. To those who were living during the period of the Heptarchy it would have seemed incredible that England should one day become one single nation, if, indeed, they ever thought in terms of England at all. But, of course, they didn't.

The idea of the nation, as Shaw shows clearly in *Saint Joan*, comes comparatively late in man's history. As recently as the fifteenth century Frenchmen were thinking in terms of Gascony or Burgundy or Picardy; scarcely if ever in terms of France. When Joan bids them follow her in the name of, and for the sake of France, she is felt to be announcing a new and startling doctrine which falls strangely on the ears of those whose patriotism has hitherto been circumscribed by the few hundred square miles of their own province or department. But the new idea catches on and presently we find the *nation* England fighting the *nation* Scotland, and a little later the United Kingdom of England, Wales, and Scotland fighting a united France. Thus a few hundred years ago man's political organization reached the stage of integration which obtains to-day, and we come to the nation State. It is surely inconceivable, I said to myself, that it should stop at this point.

What are the factors that assist, what those that resist, the integrating process?

Desire for security appears to have been the major factor in enlarging the scope of the political unit in the past. Security was, for example, the motive which led to the alliance of king and people against the feudal nobility, resulting in the establishment of the nation State at the end of the Middle Ages. It is, I reflected, something of an historical accident that the tendency to a larger integration inspired by this motive has not already proceeded to its logical conclusion in the construction of a world State. How nearly the Romans, for example, came to bringing it off. But always, it seems, the factors which make for perpetuation at the

existing level of the unit of integration actually reached have proved too strong for the drive of evolution to effect this further integration. For, whatever the unit which at any particular level of the evolutionary process happens to have been attained, whether family tribe, province, or nation State, it becomes the focus of a number of influential human sentiments. Patriotism and enthusiasm are evoked on its behalf, self-sacrifice in its service, pugnacity in its defence, jealousy for its honour. These sentiments combine to resist its absorption into a larger unit, and such absorption has been achieved in the past only at an appalling price in terms of human suffering. Nevertheless, it cannot, I thought, be reasonably doubted that a further stage of integration lies before mankind.

The proposal to supersede the State was, then, not only in harmony with the needs of the times, it was a natural development of the process which had resulted in the nation State and, incidentally, brought us to our present pass. To take a leaf out of E's book, Federalism might be said to be the next item on the evolutionary programme in its application to politics.

E had said that mutations now occurred only when they were willed. The process, as I had gathered, was roughly as follows: first, there would be an unconscious stirring in the mind of the race; then, since we have reached the *conscious* level of evolution, the unconscious stirring produced its appropriate expression in consciousness and men proceeded to will the changes which at earlier levels of the evolutionary process had occurred automatically.

That some of us were to-day willing Federal Union was true. But was this enough? Clearly it was not, un-

less people's minds had reached a condition of receptiveness, unless they already harboured, as it were, an unconscious welcome for Federal ideas which it was the business of our propaganda to translate into conscious will and desire.

Now this unconscious welcome was precisely what I had found. I had found that one had only to mention Federal Union to arouse interest, and, as often as not, to secure assent. In the most unlikely places, in the lairs of bank managers, in the consulting rooms of doctors, in the offices of insurance agents, where one would have expected to find only the same old unthinking patriotism which insisted that England's cause was righteous, that the war was glorious, that it was being fought in self-defence, and that it must continue until the Huns were beaten to their knees, one found only a resentful bewilderment. 'What! Another war in twenty-five years! Surely they must have managed things very badly!' 'I don't want to be bothered with all this!' 'Why won't they leave me alone to get on with my business and live my life in my own way?'

'Why won't *who* let you?' I had asked them in effect. The answers were very far from being unanimous. Some had said, the Germans; some—not the bank manager—the capitalist class; some, Mr. Chamberlain. But it had seemed pertinent to point out that most Germans and Frenchmen and Italians probably felt precisely the same exasperation as they did themselves—in fact, we knew from their literature that many of them did in fact feel it. It was reasonable, then, to suppose that for so many and such various discontents, all felt at the same time in so many and at such various places, there must be a common cause, and that this

common cause was the one thing that was common to all of us, the State. And with that word, the resentment which so many of us were feeling with the present conduct of human affairs and the melancholy pass to which they had been brought, found expression and burst out into revolt.

Wells had said that 'the whole intellectual life of mankind revolts against this intolerable, suffocating, murderous nuisance, the obsolescent national State.' It looked as if Wells was right, that the revolt did in fact exist, albeit unconsciously and awaiting only the quickening word to bring it into consciousness. It looked as if among men and women everywhere there was fermenting a hatred of this world of nation States, each with its Foreign Office pursuing its own interests to the exclusion of everybody else; each with its army cut to the same pattern, with its tariffs for keeping the foreigner out, with its groups of financiers rigging its exchanges; each with its own special history book, with its own special national lie about history, each with its Larousse dictionary claiming all discoveries for its own nationals; each with its special list of great men, with its peasant customs and folk-lore exactly like all the other peasant customs and folk-lore, with its national flag with its bars, horizontal or vertical or crosswise for variety, and with its multitudes of young men trained to die on its behalf and in its service in the endeavour to kill multitudes of similarly trained young men just across its border.

Suppose, I said to myself, that the revolt against all this is already afoot. Then the supreme need of our time is to put before the peoples of the world a scheme for a common government in the hope that the promp-

tings of fear may force their acceptance of the solution which has been refused to the dictates of common sense.

If it was the supreme need of our time, it was also the supreme aim of the war. If we could get a common government out of the war, then the war might conceivably be worth the fighting. What was more, if we could offer the German people a common government as a result of the war, then the war might be honourably and quickly ended. D had convincingly pointed out the advantages of Federal Union as a war aim.[1] Not the least among these was the solution which it offered for the problem of national minorities. The Treaty of Versailles had sought to solve this problem on the basis of nationalism, and the result was the Balkanization of Europe. But it was by now obvious that there is no solution on Versailles lines. The minorities of Europe are so many and so scattered that, short of the transportation of large population units, it is impossible to do justice to their aspirations on a national basis. The Federal solution outflanks the problem by repudiating nationalism. Under a Federal system minorities would be represented in a common parliament equally with the majorities who now oppress them, not as oppressed national minorities but as human beings. There seemed, indeed, to be no end to the advantages which Federal Union as a war aim possessed.

What functions should the Federal government embrace? The answer to this question demands a book to itself. Such books have indeed already appeared. But the general principle was obvious enough. I had, in-

[1] See Chapter VII, pages 116–17.

deed, already reached it at an earlier stage of my reflections.[1] There are some things which States do which by their very nature affect the members of other States. They are, broadly, those which fall within the spheres of defence, trade, colonies, currency and finance, and population movements. There are certain other things that States do that affect only their own nationals. They are, broadly, those which fall within the spheres of education, the provision of employment, marriage laws, the penal code, transport, housing and sanitation—in brief, all that which pertains to the national housekeeping or the national culture. Those spheres of State activity which belong to the first group should be transferred to a common government elected not by States as States, but by the individuals of the various States who come into union; that is to say, by all those individuals whom the activities of the existing States affect. Those spheres of State activity which belong to the second group should continue to be administered by the various nation States.

The principle was clear enough. The advantages of the proposal as a war aim were obvious enough, the necessity for the proposal, if our civilization was not to go the way of its predecessors, overwhelming enough. The time was ripe, the stage was set; all that was necessary was to convert the public. A formidable task, no doubt; some would say an impossible one; but at least it did not involve an attempt to alter human nature. Human nature, I had concluded, was mixed, neither wholly good nor wholly bad, and there seemed to be no reason to suppose that it would ever be very much different from what it was now. But I had been forced

[1] See Chapter XII, pages 253–4.

to recognize that when they are organized in States, men's collective actions are worse than their actions as individuals and now threaten our civilization with destruction. What was necessary, then, was to alter the form of man's political organization and to bring it into harmony with the needs of his world. I did not and I do not suppose that we should achieve a Federal Union as a result of this war; I scarcely believe that it will be achieved in my lifetime; it may even be the case that it will not be achieved by this civilization at all. But sooner or later, I am convinced, it must come, and amid the destruction of so many hopes, it serves here and now as a cause for which to work and a light by which to live.